

YANKEE DOODLE

COMPLETE STORIES OF THE PRESENT WAR.

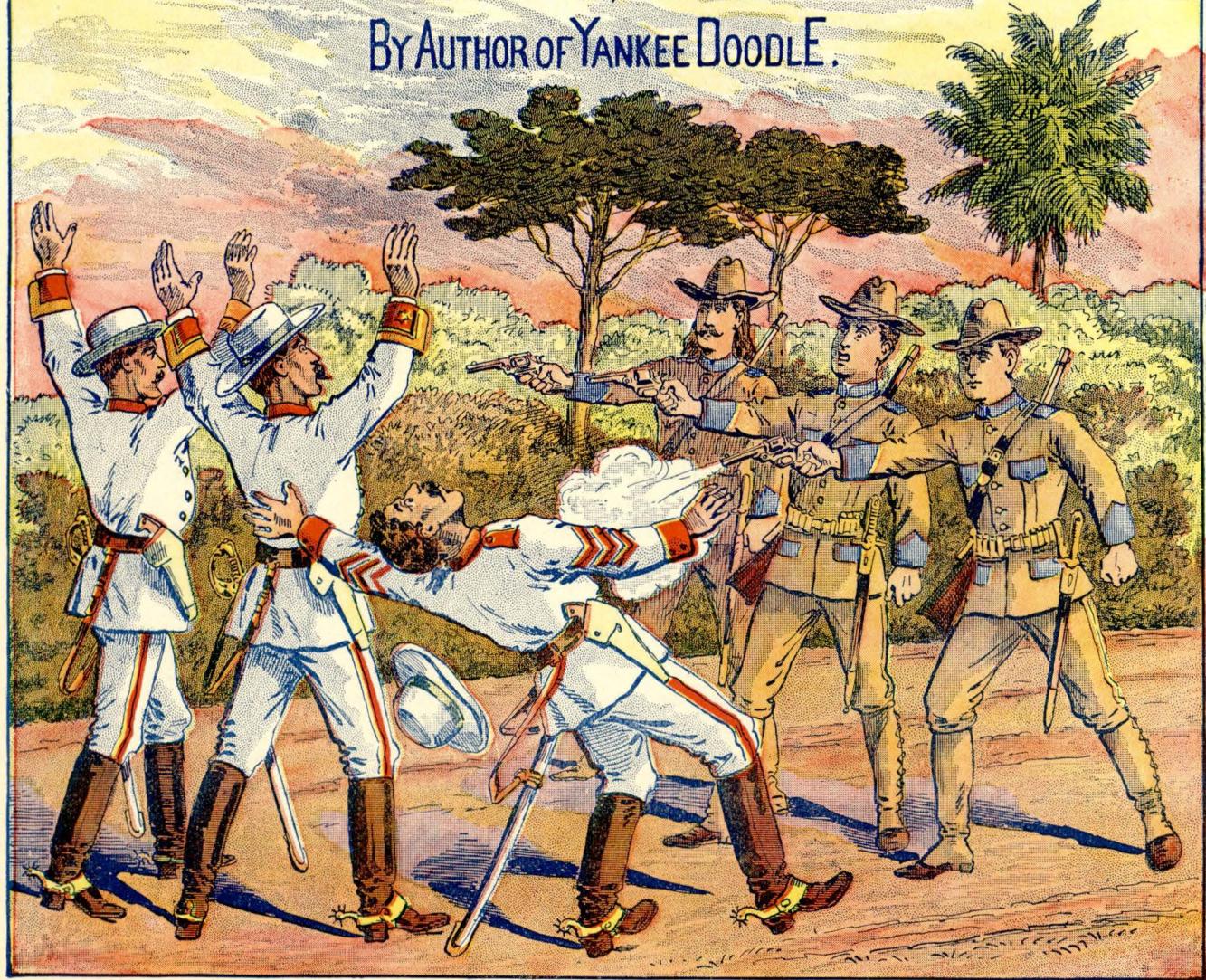
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YANKEE DOODLE AND WEYLER'S GOLD; —OR— AFTER THE CAPTAIN GENERAL'S TREASURE. BY AUTHOR OF YANKEE DOODLE.



Suddenly the three sprang out of the bushes, covered the Spaniards with their revolvers, and called out: "Hands up!" "Caramba!" gasped one of them, as he confronted Jack's revolver. The one whom Joe faced sprang back and reached for his revolver. Joe waited until he drew it, and then fired.

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CHAPTER I.

YANKEE DOODLE LANDS IN HAVANA PROVINCE TO
WATCH BLANCO—THE TEST OF CIVILIZATION.

WHEN the American army was preparing for the siege of Santiago de Cuba it became necessary for General Shafter to send competent men into each of the provinces to watch the Spanish forces, in order that he might find out whether or not reinforcements were being sent to the assistance of Toral in the beleaguered city.

There were so many trails leading over the mountains and through the great forests by which reinforcements could reach Santiago unknown to the American officers, that a strict watch by spies and scouts became an absolute necessity.

The strongest Spanish force on the island had been concentrated at Havana under the immediate command of Captain-General Blanco. His army has been estimated at from fifty to eighty thousand men, including regulars and volunteers, to say nothing of other strongly fortified posts on both the north and south sides of the island.

To land a besieging force in the neighborhood of Santiago de Cuba without keeping a strict watch on the other divisions of the Spanish army would have been the height of military folly.

Among those who had been selected for that difficult task was Phil Freeman, the New York drummer boy, who, under the name of Yankee Doodle, had won a national reputation for prudence, courage and good judgment.

He was told in a few words what was required of him, which was that he should go to the province of Havana and keep a strict watch on the movements of the captain-general and his large army, and to report through trusty messengers any movement that

looked like an attempt to send reinforcements to Eastern Cuba.

He was permitted to select his own assistants, and allowed full discretion as to his method of operations. He selected about a dozen Cubans whose courage had been well tested in the field during the two years of the revolution and two native Americans, one of whom was Joe Bailey, his fifer, a youth about his own age, and Jack Wilson, a typical New Mexico cowboy, whose acquaintance he had made at Tampa before sailing for Cuba, thus making in all a party of fifteen persons.

They were armed with revolvers and Winchesters, for which arms they carried an abundant supply of ammunition.

As soon as he had formed the party they were sent on board of one of the war-ships, which conveyed them along the south shore of the island westward, where they landed a few miles beyond Cienfuegos, under the cover of darkness.

All along that part of the coast squadrons of Spanish cavalry kept up a continuous watch to prevent the landing of hostile parties. By the merest accident they landed unperceived and gained the woods before daylight. Soon after sunrise, however, the coast-guard made the discovery on the sands of the beach that a small party had landed and gone inland.

Believing that it was a small party of filibusters who had landed, a detachment of coast guards was sent in pursuit of them, and they followed the trail until about noon, when they came up with Yankee Doodle's party who were encamped in a grove of palms.

Joe Bailey was the first to discover them, and gave the alarm. Every man in the party sprang for a tree, from behind which he watched the approach of the Spaniards, some thirty or forty in number.

"Say, boys," sung out Joe, "they are Spaniards."

"Of course they are," said Yankee Doodle; "did you think they were Dutch?"

"What are you going to do?" Joe asked.

"Fight," said Yankee Doodle.

"All right then; here goes for one who doesn't think I'm looking at him," and with that he raised his Winchester, aimed quickly and fired.

The Spaniard nearly three hundred yards away, who had incautiously exposed himself, was knocked over. The next moment the Mausers began popping and bullets flew thick among the palms without doing any damage.

"Keep cool now, boys," said Yankee Doodle. "Don't fire until you see your man, nor pull the trigger until you have taken aim."

Jack Wilson, the cowboy, was ensconced behind a huge palm, from which he could have a better view of that part of the woods occupied by the Spaniards than any other in the party. He was a man extremely quick on the trigger, and always a dead shot.

He knocked over Spaniards at the rate of one a minute for six or eight minutes, after which the enemy became alarmed, and laid down on the ground to escape his deadly aim.

"Get any bites over there?" Yankee Doodle asked him.

"No," he replied; "I am doing all the biting myself."

"Well, they don't bite over here for a cent. I've had only one shot."

"Don't be in a hurry," cautioned Jack. "Just wait and you'll soon see them moving about."

The cowboy's experience in fighting Apaches in the Far West stood him in good need in that kind of warfare, and his marksmanship was such that a piece of Spanish anatomy the size of his hand was all he needed for a target.

Presently the Spaniards ceased firing altogether, and Yankee Doodle called to the others to be careful, as they might be crawling on their hands and knees through the bushes.

After waiting nearly half an hour, they were in great doubt as to whether the enemy had retired or not.

"Pard," said Jack, calling to Yankee Doodle, "I'll crawl out that way and see what has become of them, and getting down on his hands and knees, he pushed his way through the underbrush for a distance of nearly a hundred yards. Then he suddenly found himself right in the midst of half a dozen Spaniards, and in such close quarters he dropped his rifle, yanked a revolver from his belt, and before the Spaniards could realize that he really meant fight against such odds, had knocked over two of them.

The others sprang to their feet and blazed away at him. Such was his tremendous activity, springing about and firing, that not a bullet touched him, although three passed through his clothes. Five of the enemy were wiped out in less than fifteen seconds,

while the sixth man threw up both hands above his head in token of surrender.

Hearing the rapid firing in his front Yankee Doodle and the others of his party dashed up to join him, whereupon other Spaniards nearby fired a volley and retreated. In another minute they were out of range as well as out of sight.

"Say, pard," said Jack, "I crawled right into a nest of them."

"Didn't get hurt, did you?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"No, it was the other fellows who got hurt, and here's one that threw up the sponge," and he walked up to the Spaniard who was still holding his hands above his head and disarmed him.

The prisoner was an elderly man who had evidently seen many years of service under the flag of Spain, for he was bronzed almost black, and had a half-starved look about him. For all that he could not repress a curiosity that showed in every feature as he gazed at the cowboy.

"Are you Americanos, senor?" he asked of Jack.

"You bet we are," was the reply. "How do you like our style?"

"Do all Americanos fight as you do?"

"They fight a great deal better," replied Jack, who could speak Spanish as well as a native.

The Spaniard looked around him, saw only three Americans while the rest were Cubans, and asked:

"Where are your Americanos?"

"Oh, they are coming along," was the reply.

"Where are your comrades?"

"I don't know, senor," and he looked at those of his party who had fallen under the deadly fire of the cowboy, shaking his head sadly.

"I guess they have skipped out," said Yankee Doodle, who understood enough of the language to know what was being said.

It proved that he was right, for the Spaniards had retreated, appalled at the deadly fire which had knocked over fully one half of their force.

"Where do you belong?" Yankee Doodle asked of the prisoner.

"I belong to the post-guard, senor."

"You were following our trail, were you not?"

"Si, senor; we saw where you had landed and followed you here."

"Well, you had better go back, for we have no use for you as a prisoner. The truth is we don't want any prisoners and we know very well that your officers would not regard our parole; so you can go back to your command if you wish to do so, and tell your captain that we can take care of all the men he sends after us."

The prisoner was so astonished he could hardly believe what he had heard.

"Do you mean it, Senor Americano?" he asked.

"Of course I do," said Yankee Doodle. "If I were a Spaniard I might send a bullet through you, or let these Cubans exercise their machetes on you, but being a civilized human being I'll let you go with my blessing."

"Caramba!" he exclaimed. "It cannot be that you mean it!" and he looked from one to the other of the three Americans and then at the scowling faces of the swarthy Cubans, each of whom was itching to cut him down.

"If you don't believe it," said Yankee Doodle, "just walk off in the direction you came and satisfy yourself of the fact. We would much rather let you go than be bothered with guarding and feeding you."

The Spaniard started off in the direction his comrades had gone, looking back over his shoulder all the time, as though suspecting a design on the part of his captors to shoot him in the back.

Yankee Doodle, Joe and Jack laughed heartily at his nervousness, but told him to go on, that no harm was intended him. Still he kept looking back and bumping up against trees as he slowly made his way through the woods.

Suddenly he sprang behind a big palm with the agility of a rabbit, at which Jack burst into a hoarse laugh. The Cubans, however, looked on in grim silence, for they thought it was a sin against *Cuba Libre* to turn a Spaniard loose alive anywhere on Cuban soil.

Then they saw him leave the tree and run with the speed of a deer through the bushes.

"There he goes!" laughed Joe, who caught a glimpse of him as he ran. "The poor fellow is frightened nearly to death."

"Senor," asked one of the Cubans, "why did you let him go?"

"Because I wanted him to return to his comrades," he replied, "and make them ashamed of themselves."

"You can't shame a Spaniard, senor," said the Cuban, shaking his head.

"You are very much mistaken, Manuel; that fellow will never forget that we treated him kindly and released him without any conditions. What would you have done with him?"

Manuel made no reply, save to raise his machete on a level with his breast and make a vicious thrust with it.

"Yes," said Yankee Doodle, "you would have killed him after he surrendered as a prisoner of war. I want to say to you that such conduct as that will take from Cuba the sympathies of the civilized world."

"But they treat us that way, senor."

"Very true, Manuel, and that is why America has ordered Spain out of Cuba, and unless you Cubans show yourselves to be better than Spaniards, Uncle Samuel will not leave you to govern the island, as he doesn't propose to drive out one set of savages and turn it over to another."

Manuel made no reply to that, and a few moments later Yankee Doodle told them to scatter through the bushes and pick up any Mausers and cartridge belts they could find.

They instantly ran about through the bushes, hunting for fallen Spaniards, in which they spent about

twenty minutes. In that time they found over a dozen rifles and four Spaniards who were too badly wounded to move from where they had fallen.

"By George, boys!" said Yankee Doodle, when he heard of the wounded men, "it won't do to leave those fellows there."

"Of course not," said Jack, "but we can't take them along with us."

"No, but we can make them as comfortable as possible, dress their wounds and lay them in some spot together where their comrades will probably find them."

They went to the wounded Spaniards and found that one of the four was very likely to die, whilst the other three, if properly cared for, would have a fair chance to recover.

They conveyed them to the shelter of a huge tree, under which they made a bed of leaves and laid them upon it. After this, Jack Wilson, who was quite an expert at dressing wounds in a crude way, proceeded to bandage their hurts as well as he could under the circumstances.

The wounded Spaniards seemed to be very much surprised at the kindness shown them, and expressed their thanks in unmistakable terms.

"When a man is down," remarked Jack to one of them, "I never strike him, and none but a savage would. We will leave you here, with food and water, believing that some of your comrades will come back after you."

"But, Senor Americano," said one of them with a groan, "if the Cubans should find us here they would kill us."

"Very likely," replied Yankee Doodle, who was standing by; "that is what you Spaniards have taught them to do, and that is why Spain is without the sympathy of all Christendom to-day."

The Spaniard made no reply, for he evidently felt the force of the remark; but Yankee Doodle assured him that he doubted if there were any armed Cubans outside of his own party anywhere in the province.

They were given food, which they ate ravenously, and their canteens were filled with water, after which Yankee Doodle and his party moved off through the bushes, carrying with them the Mausers and cartridge belts that remained to them as trophies of the fight.

"Now, Manuel," said Yankee Doodle to the old Cuban, who was acting as guide for the party, "it may satisfy the feeling for vengeance that you Cubans have to kill prisoners of war, but in the end you will find that clemency towards those whom the fortunes of war deliver into your hands will bring you sympathy and support; whereas, on the other hand, if you give way to the thirst for vengeance you will be rated as savages, and the whole world will protest against the government of such a beautiful land as Cuba being turned over to savage control."

"Si, senor," said Manuel, "the war will be over, then, and we will no longer feel or act like savages."

"That won't do, amigo," and Yankee Doodle shook his head. "The test of civilization is its bearing on

the battlefield. A nation that is savage there is considered savage innately by the civilized world; the nation that is humane and considerate to prisoners of war stands the test and passes into the type of Christian civilization. I am telling you this that you and your comrades may profit by it."

CHAPTER II.

A TIMELY RESCUE—HOW YANKEE DOODLE ROASTED A SPANISH LIEUTENANT.

It was extremely fortunate that not one of the little party had been hurt in the fight, Jack Wilson being the only one whose clothes had been perforated by bullets. A bullet had struck the rifle barrel belonging to one of the Cubans, but had done no damage. In the beginning of the fight three bullets lodged in the palm behind which Yankee Doodle had taken refuge.

All the others heard bullets whistling around them, but so great was their contempt for the marksmanship of the average Spanish soldier, that none of them had any fears of being hit other than by accident.

They pushed on through the woods until they struck a road that led northward in the direction of Havana, it being their intention to reach the vicinity of that city as soon as possible. After going a few miles they reached a small village where Manuel himself had frequently been.

There were about fifty houses in the place, occupied mostly by women and children, and a few old men. All the young men had been forced by the exactions of the captain-general to either join the volunteers and fight under the Spanish flag or go to the insurgents.

Weyler's order, compelling all the families to leave the country and concentrate in the cities and fortified towns, had effected the village but little, as it was in such an out-of-the-way place the Spanish officials had not reached it.

The presence of the little party of fifteen, armed to the teeth as they were, created a good deal of excitement in the place. There was one man, about sixty years of age, who told Yankee Doodle that nearly a dozen young Cubans were concealed in a great swamp a few miles west of the place to escape death at the hands of the Spaniards, and as they were armed only with the machete, it was extremely difficult for them to sustain life, much less to defend themselves against the Spaniards.

"Are they true to *Cuba Libre?*" Yankee Doodle asked.

"Every one of them, señor."

"Then take these rifles and give them to them," and the captured Mausers the party had brought with them were turned over to the old man, who immediately sent a couple of women to the swamp to tell the boys to come in and get them.

The party spent the night there, as the day was drawing to a close when they reached the place. Early the next morning they started out northward

again, after having been well supplied with tropical fruits.

They had marched perhaps five or six miles when they were overtaken by half a dozen of the young Cubans who had been hiding in the swamp. They were armed with the rifles that had been left in the village for them, and had followed the party for the purpose of joining it.

"We don't need any more men," said Yankee Doodle.

"What must we do?" they asked.

"Get others to join you," was the reply, "and avoid conflict with the enemy until there are enough of you to make a successful defense."

"But we have no arms for them."

"You must watch your opportunity and get them as we did. All your people have machetes, and that will do very well until you can get fire-arms. But let me tell you that fire-arms will do you no good unless you learn how to use them. There is no more use in shooting at a man without first taking aim than in striking at him with the machete when he is a hundred yards away."

Still, the young Cubans begged to be taken into the party, promising to obey all orders and do whatever was required of them.

"We don't want you," said Yankee Doodle, "for the work that we have to do requires no more men than we already have; a larger force, particularly of inexperienced men would only serve to expose us to greater danger."

The young men reluctantly returned to the village, while Yankee Doodle and his party continued on their way northward.

That night they encamped about half way between the north and south shores of the island in an old sugar house, the roof of which had been burned away. The place had been practically destroyed by either the Cubans or the Spaniards in one of their numerous raids through the province.

The foundations of a large residence in a beautiful grove showed that it, too, had shared in the common destruction.

"It is awful," remarked Yankee Doodle to Jack Wilson, "that the planter has no friends on either side. The Spaniards destroyed their sugar plantations in order to deprive the Cubans from deriving any benefit from them, while the insurgents did the same thing to prevent the Spaniards from gathering taxes or supplies."

"Yes," said Jack, "it's about the most savage war that I ever heard of, and had not Uncle Sam stepped in to drive out the Spaniards the whole island would have been destroyed within a couple of years."

All about the place, which was once a magnificent estate, desolation and profound silence reigned. No cattle or pigs or fowl were seen anywhere about. Whoever did the work did it well.

Early the next morning they resumed the march northward, the road becoming better as they approached the City of Havana. In many places were

seen beautiful estates, from which the owners had been driven and everything taken. Only in out-of-the-way places were seen any habitations where human beings yet remained.

The work of concentrating the population in the fortified towns had been pretty well completed, and thousands of the unfortunates, deprived of the privilege of earning their support, were slowly perishing.

As they were moving along up the road they came to a little collection of huts from which the people were being driven in a body by a party of about a score of Spanish cavalry. About thirty-five women and children with some eight or ten old men had been collected together preparatory to being marched to the city to join the thousands of reconcentrados already assembled there.

Manuel, the Cuban, was the first of the party to catch sight of them, and he quickly motioned to the others to keep back in the woods to avoid being seen. They looked on at the scene for a few minutes and noticed the women and children crying and wringing their hands while the torch was being applied to their humble homes.

"Boys," said Yankee Doodle, "I can't stand that. They've already set one of those huts afire; let's take a hand in it and save the others."

"All right," said Jack, "I'm with you."

"Very well then, let's give them one volley; every man take deliberate aim so as to make sure nobody will be hit but those intended."

It took them nearly five minutes to get into position where each one could have a fair aim and then they blazed away. There were fifteen rifles in the party and about twenty Spaniards.

It seems that some four or five aimed at one or two, hence only about one-half of the twenty were knocked over. The survivors were utterly astounded, as they were under the impression there was not an armed Cuban anywhere in the province at that time other than those who carried machetes.

They ran to their horses and sprang into the saddles. As soon as they were mounted another volley knocked over every one but the lieutenant who was in command of them.

"Now catch that fellow!" cried Yankee Doodle, "don't let him get away."

The Spaniard, however, put spurs to his horse and dashed away at full speed. Several shots were fired at him yet it looked as though he would get away scott free.

Jack Wilson, however, ran out into the road, took deliberate aim and fired, breaking the horse's hind leg, which caused him to stop.

The horse wheeled across the road when another bullet from the same rifle crashed through his head, causing him to fall in his tracks.

Several of the Cubans dashed up and seized the young lieutenant before he could disengage himself from his fallen steed.

"Good!" exclaimed Yankee Doodle. "Not one of them got away," and he ran forward to take the

young lieutenant away from the Cubans lest some of them should cut him down.

"Ah," said the lieutenant, as Yankee Doodle dashed up to him, "you are an Americano?"

"Yes," returned Yankee Doodle, "and you are a Spaniard, a very great difference indeed."

"I am a Spanish soldier, señor," returned the other, haughtily.

"So you are, and a disgrace to the name of soldier, too. The idea of a soldier being engaged in such work as this is enough to make a civilized human being blush for shame for his very species."

"I obeyed the orders of my superior officers," said the lieutenant, "which is always the first duty of a soldier."

"Yes, obedience to orders is the first duty of a soldier, and I, an American soldier, am pledged to the same obedience; but were the President of the United States to order me to do such work as this in which you have been engaged, I would tear off my uniform and break my sword under my foot. The order of a king or a president, or any court-martial on earth could never make me raise my hand against women and children."

"I have not raised my hand against them," said the prisoner.

"Bah!" sneered Yankee Doodle, contemptuously, "that hut on fire gives you the lie; that picture there of the women and children whom you have corralled, for the purpose of driving them into a pen to be starved to death, proclaims every Spanish soldier in Cuba a savage brute and coward."

The young officer was white with rage and indignation at the fierce denunciation of the young American; but he was powerless to resent it other than to protest that as a soldier he had no right to question any orders received from his superior officers.

"Very true," retorted Yankee Doodle, "but were you just half civilized you would resign and refuse to obey rather than execute such orders."

After that he made no further remark, and was led back to the little group of women and children who gathered around and hurled all sorts of execrations at him.

He stood it all without uttering a word, whilst Jack and Joe ordered the Cubans to catch the horses and gather up the arms. There were five wounded Spaniards who were now prisoners, the lieutenant who was unhurt making the sixth.

The young officer had about a hundred and fifty dollars in Spanish gold on his person, which was taken from him and distributed among the families of the little hamlet. The men who were heads of families were told by Yankee Doodle that they could have the cavalry horses for the purpose of moving their families and effects to some out-of-the-way place, where they would be safe from another visit from the Spaniards.

"If you stay here," said he, "they will send out another party to wreak vengeance upon you for the work we have done to-day in your behalf. When you

have moved your families to a safe place, you can probably sell the horses for enough money to provide food for many months for all of you."

The old men and women were profuse in their expressions of thanks, and volunteered to help the party bury the dead and assist in caring for the wounded.

"You will have to leave the wounded here," said Yankee Doodle, "in your little houses while you seek safety elsewhere for your families."

"As for you, lieutenant," he continued, turning to the prisoner, "you can return to Havana on foot and alone, as I do not believe a man like you would keep any parole you might sign."

"You have no right to parole a prisoner," returned the lieutenant.

"You are very much mistaken," said Yankee Doodle. "The highest officer in command on the field has the right to parole prisoners, and as I am in command here the rules of war hold good in this case. But I have found that while you Spaniards talk a great deal about honor, you have as little of it as any soldiers anywhere in the world."

Yankee Doodle enjoyed roasting him, for he was so indignant at the disgraceful work to which he had so suddenly put a stop, that he would scarcely have interfered had one of the Cubans raised his machete to cut him down.

A half hour later Yankee Doodle took the prisoner's sword away from him, broke it in two over his knee, and handing the two pieces back to him, said:

"You are now at liberty to return unmolested to your lines."

To his surprise, the young officer took the two pieces of his sword, restored them to its scabbard, and remarked:

"We may meet again some day, Señor Americano."

"I hope we may, lieutenant," was the reply, "but if you fall into my hands again whilst doing such dastardly work as this I will hang you up by the heels fifty feet from the ground, and leave you there as a feast for the buzzards!"

The prisoner walked away very briskly, and never once looked back while he was in sight.

"Now," said Yankee Doodle, "we will bury the dead, and do what we can for these poor fellows who have been wounded. They are not so much to blame for this sort of thing, for a refusal on their part to obey orders would mean death to them."

The dead were very quickly buried, and the five wounded men attended to as though they were no longer enemies. As soon as that was done, the families tied up their scanty household effects, and placed them on the backs of the captured horses for the purpose of going elsewhere for safety."

Yankee Doodle was quietly looking on at the work when Jack Wilson came up, and in a low tone of voice remarked that one of the Cubans was missing.

"What's become of him?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"I don't know; but I have my suspicions."

"What do you suspect?"

"I suspect that he has slipped away through the woods to head off the lieutenant somewhere up the road."

Yankee Doodle gave a low whistle and proceeded to count the number of Cubans in his party to satisfy himself whether or not any of them was missing. He found that Jack was right, that one of them had been gone ever since a few minutes after the lieutenant left.

He had scarcely finished counting, however, when Jack nudged him with his elbow, saying:

"There's the fellow. He has just come back and is helping the women and children with the others."

Yankee Doodle kept his eye on the fellow and noticed a smile of grim satisfaction on the faces of those about him. From that moment he was satisfied that the lieutenant would never reach the city to tell the story of the fate of his command.

"Jack," said he to the cowboy, "I don't want to shoot the fellow or send him away, so we won't let him know that we suspect the truth."

CHAPTER III.

A FOUL MURDER AND THE REVELATIONS THAT FOLLOWED—WEYLER'S TREASURE.

WHEN the few poor families started off on their journey in search of safety Yankee Doodle and his party stood and watched them until they disappeared from view. Then they turned and marched up the road in the direction that had been taken by the young Spanish officer who had been released after his capture.

"Pard," said Jack Wilson, "it was a streak of good luck for those poor people in more ways than one that we turned up at the time we did."

"How so, Jack?"

"Well, in the first place, we saved them from being marched to Havana, there to be starved to death. That was the best of good luck."

"So it was," assented Yankee Doodle.

"Then, in the next place, they have seventeen horses, which will bring fifty dollars apiece in gold anywhere in Cuba, and the hundred and fifty dollars taken from the lieutenant will make up about a thousand dollars, more money than the whole party has probably had in five years all put together. Why, every man, woman and child in that crowd actually feels rich, notwithstanding the fact that there are over forty of them, so you see it is good luck in more ways than one."

"So it is, Jack, and I'm blest if I don't feel happier since you told me about it."

"So do I, pard, and what's more, I've already forgiven that fellow for slipping away and following the lieutenant."

Yankee Doodle chuckled and remarked that he didn't bear any malice toward him himself.

"But," he added, "we must never let them know that we suspect what has happened, as it is absolutely necessary to have strict obedience to orders under all circumstances, for we don't know how soon

we may have a strong force after us from every point of the compass."

"That's so, pard," said Jack, "for when the lieutenant's little party is missed they'll send out scouts to hunt him up, and as we have now had two fights within as many days they'll soon hear in Havana that there is an armed force in the province."

"Yes, I expect that, and hereafter we must, as far as we can, avoid being seen or picking up a fight with straggling parties. We are sent to watch the enemy, not to fight him."

On the afternoon of the third day they found themselves in a section of country a few miles out from Havana, where the population was more or less loyal to Spain. There were a number of little villages where the people had been left unmolested by the Spaniards on account of their loyalty, whilst the Cubans had not interfered with them on account of the proximity of such a large force of the enemy."

They went into camp in a great woods a few hundred yards back from the great highway leading southward from the city. There was a spring nearby from which an ample supply of refreshing water could be had, whilst farther back, a couple of hundred yards, was a creek from which an abundance of fish could be taken at any time. Then again, close by were farms from which fruit could be gathered surreptitiously, hence as long as they remained undiscovered they would be in little danger of suffering from lack of food.

During the night Yankee Doodle, Jack and Joe decided that they would send a couple of the Cubans into the city to gather information. In the meantime, the entire party would act as scouts along the roads, leading out of the city so as to find out whether or not any considerable body of troops were leaving for parts south or east.

Early the next morning Yankee Doodle instructed Manuel, the oldest Cuban of the party, to select a companion to go with him into the city. He selected one, and the two started out for the purpose of entering the city at any place they found feasible.

Then others of the party were sent out on other roads by twos and threes, until none remained in camp except the three Americans.

"Now, boys," said Yankee Doodle to Jack and Joe, "as the others are all out we may as well try our hands at skirmishing around to see what we can find out or pick up."

"All right, pard," said Jack, "we will have to be very careful about being seen, as we do not look like either Spaniards or Cubans, and hence suspicion of us would be aroused at first sight of us."

"Oh, yes, I thought of that," said Yankee Doodle. "There is no necessity of exposing ourselves at all."

So they went out from the woods to the roadside, where, in a thick clump of bushes, they sat down to wait and watch for whatever might turn up.

They sat there for a couple of hours, during which time a number of people passed on foot and on horseback. A number of officers rode by, some evidently

of high rank, as they were accompanied by staff and orderlies.

"By George!" said Jack, "we could make some pretty heavy captures here."

"So we could," assented Yankee Doodle, "but we couldn't get away with them, and a recapture would result in our being shot. The best thing for us to do is to keep quiet and watch things."

Along in the middle of the afternoon they saw three soldiers coming along the road from the city on foot. They were smoking cigars, and evidently enjoying themselves, as though they had a day off. One of them seemed to be a man nearly fifty years old, while his two companions were apparently about half that age.

The three Americans quietly watched them, and noticed that one of the younger soldiers was signaling to the other behind the back of the older man. The other nodded his head, whereupon his comrade drew a dagger and plunged it into the back of the old man.

"Caramba!" gasped the old soldier, wheeling around to defend himself. The next moment both the young men, armed with daggers, made a combined attack upon him.

The old soldier parried their blows quite skillfully, at the same time retreating backwards toward the clump of bushes where the three young Americans were concealed.

"Here, boys, I won't stand that!" said Jack, drawing his revolver and shooting one of the old man's assailants dead.

The other, astounded at the unexpected interference, took to his heels and ran at full speed up the road.

"Blast you!" exclaimed Jack, "you shan't get away," and he raised his revolver, aimed and fired at the fleeing Spaniard, who plunged forward with his face in the dust of the road.

"By George, you've got him!" exclaimed Joe.

"Of course I did; did you expect me to let him go?" and with that Jack hurried forward, seized the fellow by the collar and dragged him into the woods.

Joe and Yankee Doodle picked up the other one and removed him from the road at the same time.

The old fellow who had been stabbed in the back sat down on the leaves a few paces from the roadside, and groaned as though in great agony. Jack returned to him and said in Spanish:

"They were trying to do you up, old man."

"Si, señor, they have killed me."

"Oh, you are not dead yet."

"No, but I soon will be. They wanted me out of the way; I was the only one who knew a secret which they feared I would reveal. Caramba! I will tell it after all," and he reached out and caught Jack's hand in his, held it tightly, looked up at him, and asked:

"Who are you, señor?"

"I am a friend to a man in your fix," replied Jack.

"You are not a Spaniard?" asked the old soldier.

"No, señor."

"Nor a Cuban?"

"No, I am an American."

"*Sancti Marie!*" exclaimed the old soldier. "It is well; I would have it so," and then he writhed as though in great pain.

Jack always carried with him a flask of brandy, which he guarded well to preserve it for emergencies. He drew it forth, carefully removed the cork, held it up before the old soldier's face with the remark that it was mighty good stuff, and held it to his lips.

The old fellow took two good swallows of it, smacked his lips, and said :

"Si, señor, it is good, but it will not save me. He stabbed me in the back like a coward; they were hired to put me out of the way."

"Is that so?" said Jack. "It was a cowardly deed."

"Si, señor, they have killed me."

"Well," said Jack, "if it is any satisfaction to you, I will tell you that they are both dead."

"Caramba! Did you get them both?"

"Yes," returned Jack. "The other fellow is in the bushes about a hundred feet from here, and this one is right before you."

"I am avenged," said the old man, "and now I will tell you why they were sent to put me out of the way: Before Captain-General Blanco was sent to displace Captain-General Weyler there was a deal of talk in the city about the great sum of money that had been wrung from the people and was lying in the strong box in the captain-general's palace. It was rumored that Weyler swore in his rage that Blanco should not have the money, and that on a dark night, accompanied by a few faithful soldiers, he conveyed a vast sum in gold from the palace and buried it somewhere on the outskirts of the city. When Blanco took command he found the treasury almost empty. He asked Weyler what had become of it, and he said that it had been spent in building the fortifications around the city and in the effort to pacify the middle and western provinces. One by one the men who aided him in burying the treasure were found dead at different times, murdered mysteriously, until at last only one of them remained, and he was an old comrade of mine, as we had campaigned together for years and years under the Spanish flag. At last he told me the secret of the buried treasure, declaring that he was expecting every day to be murdered as the others had been, and urged me to let no one know he had told me, so I might get it myself in the event that he was killed. A few nights after that he was killed, but he fought desperately for his life, wounded two of his assailants, and before he died cried out triumphantly that he knew why he had been murdered, and that he had left the secret with a friend of whom the fiends knew nothing. Other parties who had rushed up at the time heard what he said and knew that a mystery of some kind was at the bottom of it. The papers spoke of it, but not a living soul understood what it meant save myself and the one who had instigated the murder. The men

who slew him were not in the secret. They had simply been hired to kill him that the secret might not remain with any one except he who owned the treasure, probably Weyler himself."

"But Weyler is not in Havana; he is in Spain," remarked Yankee Doodle, who was listening to the old man's story.

"Very true, señor; but when he left Havana he left behind him the names of the six men who were to be put out of the way, and they were the ones who helped him bury the gold. And they have been killed one at a time, none of whom, save the last one, my old comrade, suspected why they were thus being taken off. He thought it singular and so confided the secret to me. He had half a dozen other personal friends besides myself with whom he was more or less a boon companion, and when he declared with his last breath that he knew why he had been murdered and had confided the secret to another, they at once began to ferret out his friends. Several of them have been secretly slain until I became alarmed and surrounded myself with precautions that protected me at night, as I knew they would not dare attack me in daylight when I would be apt to defend myself successfully. I had even made up my mind to desert to the insurgents and lead a party of them some day to the spot where the treasure lies buried, turn it over to Maximo Gomez that it might be used to crush the men who were engaged in such dastardly work. To-day three of us were ordered to convey a message to the family of an officer at the residence of a planter out on this road seven miles from the city. We were told to leave our arms behind as there were no insurgents anywhere in the province. It was simply a ruse to get me out of the city that I might go the way of all the others. Now, Señor Americano, give me another sip of that brandy, and I will tell you where you can find the treasure just as it was told me."

Jack again presented the flask to his lips, and the old fellow took a couple of swallows of its contents.

"It is on the road to Mariel, three miles beyond the intrenchments, on the west side of the city," said he, "after crossing a stone bridge over a ravine that is a turbulent stream during the rainy season, but without water in the dry season. You turn square to the left and go up the ravine to a spot where four magnolia trees stand, ten or twelve feet apart, at right angles from each other, forming almost a perfect square."

"One of those trees contains a hollow with an opening fifteen feet above the ground nearly as large as a man's head. The gold was poured into that hollow instead of being buried under the ground, as an excavation could not have been made without leaving traces that would have excited suspicion."

"How far is it from the bridge to those four magnolias!" Jack asked.

"I don't know, señor, but the position the trees occupy near the ravine is landmark enough to guide any one. I am sure, though, that it is a short dis-

tance above the road, else my comrade would have so told me. If you secure the gold you will have a great, great fortune. I have a daughter living in Salamanca, Spain, who is working in one of the great cigarette factories there. Her name is Nina Carranza. I beseech you to convey to her fifty thousand pesos as an inheritance from me, simply telling her that I left it for her use with my blessing. Will you do that, Señor Americano?"

"Si, señor," said Jack. "I pledge you the honor of an American soldier that if we secure the money it will be conveyed to her as soon as possible after the war between the United States and Spain has ended."

The old man looked at Yankee Doodle and Joe inquiringly, and both promptly assured him that they, too, would give the same pledge and faithfully perform it.

"You call yourself an American soldier," said the old man, looking up at Jack. "Is that true?"

"Yes," answered Jack, "we are American soldiers who are here in the woods watching the movements of the Spanish army."

"You are spies," said the old soldier, "and you will be shot if captured."

"No, we are not spies, for we are outside of the Spanish lines acting as scouts, and have no intention of placing ourselves in the position of spies, nor have we any fear of being captured."

The old man had been growing weaker and weaker all the time, and about twenty minutes after he ceased talking he gave a sudden gasp, a groan and all was over.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THREE FRENCHMEN AND THE STORY ONE OF THEM TOLD.

"PARD," said Jack, looking over at Yankee Doodle, "he's gone."

"Yes," said Yankee Doodle, "it was a treacherous blow in the back, and I am glad that the man who did it went ahead of him."

"So am I," returned Jack, "and all the more glad because he got it in the back, too."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, and I think about the same spot as where he struck the old man, just under the left shoulder blade. He was running at full speed when I plugged him, and fell forward on his face like a boy diving into the water."

"That's good!" added Joe, "and besides that it was a good shot anyway."

"Oh, I was bound to have him," returned Jack, and then he added: "Say, pard, for fear that something might be forgotten, you had better take a pencil and write down the directions given by the old man so no mistake will be made."

"That's it," said Joe, "write down the directions and let us see if you get it straight."

Yankee Doodle always carried a note-book and pencil with him, and as they sat by the side of the dead soldier he carefully wrote down the directions that

were to guide them to the four magnolia trees which held the stolen plunder of the infamous Weyler.

When he had done so he read it over carefully to the other two.

"I guess that's right," said Jack, nodding approvingly. "What do you say to it, Joe?"

"It's all right, I guess," Joe answered.

"Now," said Yankee Doodle as he returned the note-book to his pocket, "what shall we do with these three bodies? We must not let them lie here in the woods so close to the roadside, and we have no pick nor shovel with which to bury them?"

"Well, what can we do with them?" asked Jack.

"The best thing we can do," advised Yankee Doodle, is to take them out into the middle of the road, and leave them there for the party of officers to see as they ride by on their return to the city. They will be sure to send out after them."

"Yes," added Jack, "and they will also send a company or two out to scour the woods in search of the insurgents, thinking that they had done the killing—and that is something that we don't wish just now."

"That's so," assented Yankee Doodle. "The best thing we can do is to take them over on the other side of the road about a quarter of a mile out in the woods and leave them there;" and that was what they finally did.

The two murderers were left very unceremoniously at an exposed spot, but their victim was carefully covered with a great bed of leaves, after which the three returned to the road, crossed over to the other side and again sat down in the clump of bushes to view whatever procession might pass along in front of them.

The party of Spanish officers who had passed down the road several hours before returned evidently in a hilarious mood, as they were laughing and talking at a great rate.

"They are having an easy time of it over here," remarked Yankee Doodle, "as they are consuming rations and doing no fighting."

"I guess rations are a little scant with them," remarked Joe, "for the blockade has put a stop to supplies coming by water."

"Oh, that doesn't interfere with the officers in the least, for they will have three square meals a day even though the soldiers get but one. Besides the blockade doesn't amount to anything except to keep vessels from coming in; the city has all the country behind it, where, in such a climate and such rich soil vegetables can be raised in the greatest abundance in a few weeks. In is just like sitting down on the front steps of a house to blockade the family within whilst the back door and the back gate remain open to all the world."

"That's what I think, too, pard," said Jack; "and I suppose that is some of the work of the Board of Strategy."

"Oh, yes," laughed Jack, "it looks well on paper, and satisfies some people who are easily pleased."

During the conversation they frequently had to cease talking to avoid being heard by people who were passing along the highway. A little before sunset they were still sitting quietly in the bushes when they saw two of their own scouts pass along the road accompanied by several Cubans, with three women, apparently a mother and two daughters.

When they were out of sight Yankee Doodle turned to Jack, and asked :

"What do you think of that?"

"Oh, I guess they are scraping up acquaintance through which they may get information."

"Yes, maybe so, but we'll see what report they have to make when they return to camp. And by the way, I think we had better go there right now, before it becomes too dark."

"Yes," said Jack, "for when the sun goes down in this country it is like snuffing out a candle, for it's dark all at once."

"That's so," laughed Yankee Doodle; "I've often noticed that," and the three arose and made their way back to where they had established their camp while remaining in that vicinity.

To their surprise they found two of the Cubans had just returned, and were building a fire for the purpose of preparing a little supper.

"Did you find out anything?" Yankee Doodle asked them.

"Very little, senor," one of them replied; "everything seems to be quiet in the city, but they have thrown up strong lines of earthworks all around it from the east to the west side, and have a large army there."

"Oh, yes, we all knew that before. Did you see any of the other boys after you left here?"

"No, senor, for we went in the direction that was not taken by any of the others."

"Did you meet with any trouble at all?"

"Only once; we met two volunteers who were visiting at a house where we asked for water; they asked us where we belonged. We told them we lived near Calvario, and it turned out that both of them had been reared there and knew everybody in the place, so they ordered us to surrender, but we didn't do it."

"Did you have any fight?"

"Si, senor, and we killed them both."

"I am sorry," said Yankee Doodle, "not for the volunteers, but because it might interfere with our work here."

"It couldn't be helped, senor, for they ordered us to surrender, which is a thing we couldn't do."

"Very true; I have no fault to find, only regret the necessity of it. What did you do with the bodies?"

"We left them where they fell in the yard in front of the house, as we feared there might be more of them about the place."

"How far away from here was it?"

"Some seven or eight miles, senor, on the east side of the city."

"Did you see no other troops?"

"None except those who were behind the breastworks."

By the time the camp-fire was well burning three more of the scouts came in, who reported that they found everything quiet where they had been, and had seen no evidence of any movement on the part of the enemy in any direction, but several times had been forced to conceal themselves to avoid being seen by strolling parties of Spanish soldiers.

A little later some of the other scouts came in with reports similar to the others; but the two who were seen passing along the road with the Cuban women and men didn't show up during the night at all.

Manuel and his comrades were not expected to return for a couple of days, as they were to make their way into the city and remain as long as they thought proper. The night was passed without interruption or disturbance of any kind, and the next morning the same programme was agreed upon.

As soon as the others had left, Yankee Doodle, Jack and Joe decided to make their way around to the west side of the city and strike the Mariel road, which ran from Havana down the north shore to the town of Mariel, where there was a Spanish garrison and forts for sea defense.

Yankee Doodle had once before been on that road on a scouting expedition, and had seen the town of Mariel through a spy-glass from an elevation in the rear, but how to reach it from where they were he was somewhat at a loss to determine.

"We ought to have a guide," he remarked to Jack, "but I am not willing that any of the Cubans should have any part in the secret that the old soldier confided to us."

"Neither am I," said Jack, "for while some of them are brave and trustworthy, it is difficult to find out who they are."

"That's it," said Yankee Doodle, "so we'll keep it to ourselves. We are now on the south side of the city, while Mariel is on the north shore directly west of it. We have a compass to guide us, so I guess we can find our way anywhere we wish to go."

"Of course, we can," returned Jack. "If we get lost we can find ourselves again, so come ahead."

They crossed the road and plunged into the woods on that side and pushed westward. The farther they went the more dense the forest became, but after going a couple of miles they came upon a clearing, across which they saw a grove of trees above which a thin column of smoke ascended.

"I guess we'll find a road out there somewhere," remarked Yankee Doodle, "and that smoke means either a house or a camp; so it is best for us to keep in the edge of the timber lest we run into danger which might be well for us to avoid."

They skirted around the clearing, keeping well under cover of the timber until they struck a road which led in the direction of the column of smoke. There they stopped for half an hour to make sure of their bearing before venturing down the road. But seeing no sign of life about they ventured out and went in

the direction of the grove, where they found a farmhouse with three or four tenant cabins in the rear.

The smoke they had noticed issued from the chimney of the larger house, in front of which they saw a couple of children playing. When the children saw them they scampered inside, and a few moments later an old man appeared at the door, who gazed inquiringly at them.

As Jack's Spanish was almost without foreign accent, it was left with him to do the talking. Yankee Doodle and Joe remained out in the road while Jack went up to the house to speak to the old man.

"Senor," said he in a very respectful tone, "we wish to go to Mariel; can we reach it by this road?"

"No, senor," replied the old man, "the Mariel road is over this way," and he pointed to the rear of the house.

"How far away is that road, senor?"

"It is more than four miles."

"How can we get to it?"

"You will have to follow the path through the woods; you will find it nearly a mile below here."

"Does that path lead straight to the Mariel road?"

"It is not a straight path, senor, but it will lead you into that road. Have you ever been to Mariel?"

"No, senor, but we wish to go there."

"You are not a Cuban?" said the old man.

"No, senor, we are French, and we are trying to get to Mariel so that we can communicate with the French consul."

"The French consul is in Havana, senor."

"Yes, I know, but there are people in Mariel who know us, and we think it best to see them first, that we may have someone to vouch for us."

It was a plausible story and seemed to satisfy the old man. He came out into the yard and soon became very voluble. He asked if they knew anything about the war.

"Not much," returned Jack; "we know that our place has been destroyed down near Cienfuegos by the insurgents, who treated us as though we were Spaniards; and when we appealed to the Spaniards they treated us as though we were Americans, so we are trying to place ourselves under the French flag for safety."

"Strange," said the old man, "that Spaniards should treat Frenchmen that way."

"Oh, I don't know," said Jack, "they are as bad as the Cubans, as both sides plunder people who fall into their hands."

"Did they plunder you?"

"They tried to, senor, but as the insurgents had left us nothing they got nothing, which seemed to anger them very much. We intend to report our case to the French Government."

The old man was Spanish to the core, and remarked that there were so many disloyal people in Cuba that it was difficult for the Spanish officers to distinguish friend from foe.

"It is their business, senor," said Jack, "to treat people as law-abiding until they find out that they are disloyal. I have lived in Cuba many years, and we have paid our taxes to Spain faithfully and tried to obey all the laws of the land; but we have been plundered by the Spanish officers all the time, and the method pursued by the insurgents is simply a repetition of what they have learned from the Spaniards themselves."

"*Caramba!*" exclaimed the old man; "you do not talk like a loyal man."

"I am a loyal Frenchman," said Jack, "and Spaniards and insurgents alike have forced me to apply to the French flag for protection. I owe no allegiance to Spain, except to obey Spanish laws as long as I remain in Spanish territory."

Joe and Yankee Doodle, some fifty feet away from the house, were quietly listening to the story that Jack had put up, but neither of them showed by word or action that they were in any way interested in it. They heard the old man ask Jack if his two companions were Frenchmen also.

"Yes," they heard him reply, "but they are not as well up in Spanish as I am."

"My daughter speaks French," said the old man, "for she was educated in Bordeaux, where I have a brother living," and he turned toward the house and called out:

"Narcissa, come here!"

A few moments later a beautiful girl appeared in the doorway, and was told by the old man that here were three Frenchmen who were on their way to Mariel, and that if she wished to talk with them in French, she could do so, as two of them understood very little Spanish.

"Great Scott!" whispered Yankee Doodle to Joe, "we are in for it now, for I know even less of the frog-eaters' lingo than I do of Spanish."

"Let us skip," advised Joe.

"What excuse can we have for doing so?" laughed Yankee Doodle.

"Here comes excuse enough," answered Joe, as three horsemen were seen coming down the road at a brisk canter.

CHAPTER V.

TWO CUBANS WITH A BAG.

YANKEE DOODLE turned around quickly and gazed at the three horsemen approaching, and after a moment or two of hesitation, remarked to Joe:

"They are two Spanish officers and an orderly."

"Are you sure?" Joe asked.

"Yes, I am certain of it."

"Then we've got to skip out."

Yankee Doodle gave a warning whistle which caused Jack to wheel around and look inquiringly at him.

"Some Spaniards are coming," said Yankee Doodle in English, whereupon Jack said to the old man:

"Pardon me, senor; some soldiers are coming and we must leave," and with that he hurriedly joined

Yankee Doodle and Joe, who pointed out to him the three horsemen who were approaching.

"Only three?" said he; "why should we run away from them?"

"Because it is to our interest to avoid making trouble anywhere in this neighborhood."

"Oh, yes," said Jack; "I forgot," and the three started off down the road on a brisk run with the intention of gaining the woods before the horsemen could overtake them.

The Spaniards noticed them, but appeared to take no interest in them whatever. Just as the three gained the wood they looked back and saw the old man and his daughter talking to the Spaniards in front of the gate.

The Spaniards stopped scarcely half a minute ere they put spurs to their horses and dashed off in pursuit.

"By George!" said Yankee Doodle, "they are coming for us. We had better push on through the timber and get out of the way."

They hurried away into the depths of the forest, but much to their surprise soon found that the Spaniards had dismounted and were following them.

"Oh, they can't find us in the woods," laughed Yankee Doodle, and so they kept on.

After going half a mile farther Jack came to a sudden halt, and said:

"Pards, those fellows are following our trail with the instinct of Apaches. We can't throw them off, so we may as well stop and find out what they want."

"Are you sure of that?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"Dead sure," he replied. "I'm good at trailing myself, and understand all about it."

"Then we'll stop and wait for them," and stationing themselves in a clump of bushes, revolvers in hand, they quietly waited for the three Spaniards to come up.

They waited about five minutes, when the trio appeared, one of them leading the way like an experienced woodsman.

Suddenly the three sprang out of the bushes, covered the Spaniards with their revolvers, and called out:

"Hands up!"

"Caramba!" gasped one of them, as he confronted Jack's revolver.

The one whom Joe faced was evidently the orderly of one of the officers. He sprang back and reached for his revolver. Joe waited until he drew it, and then fired.

He sank down in his tracks, dead as a smoked herring.

"Caramba!" exclaimed the other two; "don't shoot!"

"Why have you followed us?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"We wanted to know who you were," replied one of them, whose uniform showed that he was a major of the Spanish army.

"Why did you wish to find out who we are?"

"Because it is our business to do so, señor."

"Well, it would do you no good and might do us harm, so the best thing you can do is to go back to where you came from and tell the old man and his daughter that you couldn't find us."

"Yes, señors," said the major, "I quite agree with you that it is best we should do that."

"Very good," laughed Yankee Doodle, "you seem to be a little more sensible than the average Spaniard; we have no desire to harm you nor to permit you to harm us. So you had better return now while you have the opportunity to do so."

The major turned square around on his heel and started off through the woods, followed by his companion. They were no sooner screened by the bushes that grew thick thereabouts than both wheeled, drew their revolvers and charged back, firing as they went.

It was a treacherous act, and took the boys completely by surprise. Jack, however, still held his revolver in his hand and was quick to return the fire.

He shot the major through the right shoulder, causing him to drop his revolver, reel and fall. The other man was shot squarely through the head and sank down in his tracks without a groan.

The cowboy walked over to where the major lay and said:

"You are a typical Spaniard, and I'm glad you got your dose. Nobody but a Spaniard would have played such a trick, and I have a mind to finish you."

"Oh, no, Jack," said Yankee Doodle, "no matter what he did, don't shoot him while he is down."

"Then hold 'im up, pard, till I slug 'im."

The major made no reply to anything that was said to him, and it was quite evident that he feared they would finish him. Finally, in response to a question put to him by Yankee Doodle, he admitted that he was an officer in the Spanish army, and that he had ridden out of the city to see the daughter of the family in the house back up the road.

"It's a pity," said Yankee Doodle, "that you didn't stay there when you reached it."

"Yes," replied the major, "I'm sorry I did not, but the old man told us that you were suspicious characters, so you cannot blame us for following you up."

"I blame you for nothing, except for firing on us after we had spared your lives."

"I believed it was my duty to do so," returned the major.

"You have queer ideas of duty. I would blow my own brains out before I would fire upon a man who had spared my life. If you think you can make your way back to the house by yourself, you may do so; if not, we will assist you there ourselves."

He tried to rise to his feet, but the pain of his wound was too much for him. Yankee Doodle and Joe assisted him to rise, after which all three accompanied him to the roadside. There they saw him reel when released, as though he would fall.

Joe sprang to his side and caught him just in time,

while Yankee Doodle remarked that they had better see him to the house.

Jack caught the three horses and led them back, while Joe and Yankee Doodle assisted the wounded officer on the way.

They were seen by the old man and his daughter before they were within two hundred yards of the house. The girl ran forward to meet them.

"I am shot, senorita," said the major, "and both the lieutenant and the orderly are dead."

"Why did you do it, messieurs?" she asked in French, looking at Jack.

Jack knew it was French, but really did not know what she had asked, so he said in Spanish:

"We shot them, senorita, because they tried to shoot us. You cannot blame us for that."

"Do you not speak French?" she asked in Spanish.

"Si, senorita, but I do not wish to say anything in the presence of the major which he does not understand."

"No matter," said the major; "if she wishes to speak in French, do so."

"I prefer to speak Spanish," returned Jack.

The look the girl gave him told plainly that she was onto his game, but she turned quickly and asked the major if he was badly hurt.

"Yes, senorita," said he; "I am shot in the shoulder."

"Then you must come to the house, where we will send to the city for your surgeon."

Yankee Doodle and Joe assisted him into the house, where he was laid upon a lounge. The girl stopped on the steps, turned to Jack, laid her hand on his arm, and remarked in quite good English:

"You are Americans, not Frenchmen!"

"Yes, senorita," he laughed, "but you must admit that we tried to avoid making any trouble for you or your friends."

"Yes, yes," she said, "but I'm sorry it happened."

"So am I, senorita, but I assure you we are here in this locality on a mission of peace, not war; so if you will keep our secret it will not only be best for us, but for you and yours also. Americans make no fight on women and children, or non-combatants. At the same time we defend ourselves whenever assailed."

"Did the major attack you?" she asked, in a half whisper.

"He did, and in a cowardly manner," and in a few brief words he explained to her what had taken place in the woods.

Her eyes flashed as she said:

"I am glad you told me that," and then she passed into the house, leaving him just outside the door.

Yankee Doodle and Joe soon joined him, and together all three left the place, going down the road in the direction of the little path which the old man had described to them.

After going about a mile they found it, and at once turned into it, going in a north-westerly direction.

"Say, Jack," said Yankee Doodle, "it's a pity we can't speak French."

"Oh, I don't know," laughed the cowboy. "I found that she could speak English as well as we could."

"What!" gasped Yankee Doodle; "is that so?"

"Yes, for we talked for a minute or two outside the door, while you and Joe were helping the major inside."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" ejaculated Joe. "Did she find out that we are Americans?"

"Yes, for I frankly admitted it; but I told her that we were not there on any warlike mission, and would rather have gotten away without doing any harm at all."

"Then we may expect to find several hundred Spaniards looking for us," remarked Yankee Doodle.

"No, I think not; I asked her to keep the secret, and from her manner I am satisfied she will."

"If she does, then," said Yankee Doodle, "she'll be the first woman that ever did."

"Oh, they can keep a secret when they wish to," said Jack, "and I believe she does. I'll bet my revolver she is glad the major is wounded, for when I told her how treacherously he had acted her eyes flashed, and she said she was glad I had told her of it."

"Oh, ho, then! There's a story behind that. I guess the major is a suitor for her hand against her will and wishes, and we played into her hands by knocking him over."

"I'll bet so, too," assented Jack.

They pushed on, following the path through which no vehicle had probably ever traveled, as it was too narrow for anything but cattle, horses and travelers on foot. It was a very winding path, for it pointed at almost every point of the compass, in avoiding swamps and jungles.

They had followed it a little over a mile when they were startled by two rifle shots in the woods on their right, apparently not more than a hundred yards away. All three came to a sudden halt and listened, but they heard no other sound.

Yankee Doodle motioned to them to follow him into a thick clump of bushes, where they sat down on the leaves to wait and listen to what else would happen.

Nearly an hour passed when two more shots rang out pretty near in the same locality.

"That is not war," whispered Yankee Doodle, "but I'll bet it is murder."

"That's just what it is," whispered Joe, nodding his head. "Why should we bother with it?"

"We are not bothering with it," replied Yankee Doodle, "but we must be very cautious to avoid being bothered with ourselves."

A few moments later they heard footsteps coming along the path, and all three held their breath as they listened. Two Cubans passed going in the direction they themselves had been traveling. Both were armed with rifles and machetes, while one of

them carried a bag in which an ill-shapen object about the size of a peck measure had been thrust.

They passed on out of sight and hearing.

"I don't like that," whispered Yankee Doodle, "for they are going in the same direction as ourselves. Were they going the other way I wouldn't mind."

"What's to be done?" Jack asked.

"We've got to follow them, though we run the risk of being ambushed."

"Well, we've got to run a risk anyhow," replied Jack, who cared very little for risks of any kind.

They waited some fifteen or twenty minutes longer and then resumed their journey. But they walked silently, each with his hand on his revolver ready for any emergency.

They neither saw nor heard anything of the two Cubans, and at the end of another hour emerged into a big road running east and west. There they stopped and looked around as if trying to get their bearing.

"This is the Mariel road," remarked Yankee Doodle, "but how far we are from Mariel or Havana I don't know."

"Which way is Mariel?" Jack asked him.

"It is west of us."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes, for we certainly cannot be west of the town ourselves."

"Then," said Jack, "we had better go the other way until we strike that stone bridge, or else come in sight of the city."

"That's just what we must do," assented Yankee Doodle, leading off in the direction of Havana.

When they had gone about a mile up the road, which was a very broad highway, they saw the two Cubans over a quarter of a mile ahead of them.

"By George, boys," said Yankee Doodle, "there they are!"

"Yes," assented Jack, "they are the two very chaps, for one of them is still carrying that bag. Hanged if I'm not sorry we didn't stop them in the woods."

"So am I," said Yankee Doodle, "but they don't seem to be afraid of being seen by anybody."

"That's so," assented Jack, but the next moment he saw them dodge into the woods by the roadside with a startling suddenness.

"Hello!" exclaimed Joe, "what do you think of that?"

"I think they have gone into the woods," said Yankee Doodle, "and I guess we had better follow their example," and he turned into the woods as he spoke, followed by the other two.

"What's the matter, pard?" asked Jack.

"I want to wait and see what those fellows are running from, as I don't know whether they are dodging us or somebody ahead of them."

After waiting about a quarter of an hour Yankee Doodle put his head far enough out of the bushes to get a view of the road eastward. He sprang back quickly, saying:

"Come, let us get back farther in the woods!"

There's a company of Spanish horse coming this way."

Joe and Jack sprang up and followed him some fifty yards back in the timber, where they halted and remained until the cavalry had passed.

When the sound of their hoofs on the road could no longer be heard they returned to the roadside, where Yankee Doodle again reconnoitered to see if the coast was clear. As he did so, he saw one of the Cubans standing alone out in the road looking down in his direction. He stood still and watched him.

"What do you see, pard?" Jack asked.

"I see one of the Cubans in the road looking to see if the coast is clear."

CHAPTER VI.

A CLOSE CALL AND A NIGHT OF HORROR.

YANKEE DOODLE stood there by the roadside, watching the solitary Cuban a quarter of a mile away, until the latter turned and resumed his journey toward Havana.

"He is going it alone," he remarked to Jack and Joe.

"He is, eh? What's become of the other fellow?"

"Tell me and I'll confide the secret to you."

"Has he got the bag?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll bet he has knocked the other fellow out, and that there is something in that bag that has cost more than one life. Suppose I draw a bead on him and bring him down?"

"Oh, thunder, Jack, he might be a perfectly innocent man."

"Maybe so, pard. If he is, he is a rare specimen of the Cuban."

"Oh, they are not all bad."

"I don't say that they are, but I've seen precious few good ones since landing on the island."

"I quite agree with you in that, but I wouldn't like to go into the business of killing them off on general principles. If we can push on a little faster, and keep well enough in the bushes to avoid being seen by him, we can probably overtake him, and I guess we had better try it."

"All right, go ahead," and Yankee Doodle went forward in a stooping position at a pretty rapid pace, save in spots where the bushes were too close for him.

They kept it up for a distance of a mile or so, by which time they were within a hundred yards of the solitary Cuban. Then they slackened their speed, but kept creeping up on him until they had lessened the distance by one half.

By that time they had begun to descend a gently sloping hill, at the foot of which they made the startling discovery of an old stone bridge, over which the great road passed to another hill on the farther side.

Yankee Doodle stopped and motioned to Jack and Joe to do likewise and keep silent. They did so, all three watching the solitary Cuban. They saw him step into the bushes, deposit his bag there, after which he reappeared in the road, crossed over the

stone bridge, and proceeded to make a minute inspection of it.

He examined the bridge on the farther side very carefully, both on the right and the left, after which he walked to the center of it and looked down at the turbulent stream that was pouring through under it on its way to the sea.

Then he gazed up stream like one who seemed a bit doubtful as to his bearing.

After standing on the bridge for nearly five minutes the Cuban crossed it on the west side in the direction of the spot where the three Americans were concealed and started off into the woods on that side of the ravine.

"Boys," whispered Yankee Doodle to Jack and Joe, "as sure as we live that fellow is looking for Weyler's gold!"

"If he is I hope he'll find it," remarked Jack, "as that would save us the trouble of hunting for it ourselves. We can easily take care of him."

"But I don't like to have a Cuban in the secret," said Yankee Doodle, shaking his head.

"Oh, he won't be in it with us," chuckled Jack, "for I think he killed his companion in order to scoop the whole thing himself."

"Come on," whispered Yankee Doodle, "we must keep him in sight," and they began dodging about through the bushes in their efforts to keep sight of the solitary Cuban, who was slowly and cautiously making his way through the woods along the west bank of the ravine.

They followed him for a distance of nearly the eighth of a mile, when they saw him stop and look around at a large collection of huge magnolia trees. They stood very thick about there, fully one hundred of them being in plain view of the spot where the three Americans stood. There were also nearly a dozen of them lying on the ground, evidently prostrated by a great cyclone or tornado. Some of them were torn up by the roots, whilst others were broken at different heights above the ground.

They noticed the Cuban wandering around amongst them with the air of one who was very much puzzled. Several times he was out of sight of the three Americans behind some of the great magnolias. But he would reappear again, going from one tree to another.

By and by he disappeared altogether, and fully fifteen minutes passed without anything being seen of him.

"What's become of him?" Jack asked in a whisper.

"Oh, he is behind the trees," answered Yankee Doodle. "Keep quiet."

"Well, I'd like to see him get out from behind the trees once in a while," and they stood quietly watching and waiting until upward of half an hour had passed.

Then they decided to go forward in quest of him. On reaching the tree behind which Yankee Doodle

had last seen the Cuban turn, they were very much astonished at finding nobody there.

They looked around in every direction, but could see nothing of him.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" ejaculated Jack. "He vanished from sight right before our eyes."

"Oh, no," said Yankee Doodle, "he vanished behind this tree here."

"But where is he now?"

"He's nit," said Joe. "Let's scatter and look for him," and the next moment the three drew their revolvers and hurried about from tree to tree, looking everywhere for the missing Cuban.

At the end of half an hour they gave up the search satisfied that he had given them the slip.

"Now, see here, boys," said Yankee Doodle, "that fellow is around here somewhere, for I cannot imagine how he could slip away from us as he did, as I had my eye on him when he passed behind this tree. How he could get away without being seen puzzles me."

"Well, what's to be done?" Joe asked.

"Look for the four magnolias," replied Yankee Doodle, "standing at right angles to each other some ten or twelve feet apart."

They each started off in search of four trees standing in that particular manner. Yankee Doodle soon found where a huge magnolia had been torn up by the roots in a storm. Three were left standing in the position that seemed to comply with what he was looking for.

"That tree," said he looking at the prostrate giant "if it were now standing would make a quartette at right angles with each other."

He then walked around the three trees that were standing, looking up twelve or fifteen feet from the ground in search of the hole that would reveal the hollow one he was looking for.

Each of the three trees, however, appeared to be perfectly sound and solid.

"None of these are hollow," he said to himself. "I'll examine the one on the ground." But when he went to it it lay so flat on the surface of the earth that it was impossible for him to tell whether or not there was a hole on the under side or not.

He had nothing with which to test the solidity of the log except his rifle barrel. He tapped it two or three times with that, but it gave forth a sound that left him more in doubt than he was before.

"Well, I can find these again," he said to himself, "and I'll look for others. If the hollow tree is standing the hole is about twelve or fifteen feet above the ground. It was one of four standing at right angles some ten or twelve feet apart."

He then stood up on the log, and looked around in every direction for Jack and Joe. He had been so busy examining the four trees he took no notice of the direction the other two had taken. He knew, though, they could not be very far away, so he kept his position on the prostrate magnolia for nearly a

quarter of an hour, in the hope of catching a glimpse of one or both of them moving about in the timber.

By and by he began to feel just a bit uneasy, and regretted that the three did not remain together.

"I fear we made a mistake in separating," he muttered to himself, "and we'll be in a deuce of a fix if we don't get together before night, and that will be upon us in another hour."

He was about to leap down from the prostrate magnolia to go in search of Jack and Joe, when he was startled by the crack of a rifle some two hundred yards away in the woods back of him. At the same instant his hat flew off his head.

Quick as a flash he tumbled off the trunk of the tree as though he had been shot through the head.

He lay flat down alongside of it where his hat had fallen, and drew his revolver.

"That came from the Cuban," he muttered, "and if I keep quiet he may show up; if I fail to bring him down it will be because I have forgotten how to shoot—but I don't think I have."

A half hour passed, during which time he never moved from his position. His wonder as to the whereabouts of Joe and Jack increased all the time.

"This is the worst fix I was ever in," he muttered, "for it won't do for me to leave here without finding the other two. I don't believe they would return to the road without coming back this way for me."

He knew that within a half hour or so night would be on him, when the darkness in such a forest would be so great that he could almost feel it.

Just then he saw creeping towards him on the trunk of the prostrate tree a creature, the sight of which filled him with horror.

It was four or five feet long, nearly as large as his thigh, and of the shape of an enormous lizard or alligator. It crawled along the trunk of the tree, stopping at intervals, raising its head and looking about.

To him, in his position, it was far more repulsive looking than anything he had ever seen, for along its back and tail it had a corrugated ridge not unlike that he had seen on alligators.

It is well to explain to the reader that the animal he saw was an iguana, a species of lizard common in Cuba, and as harmless as the little six-inch lizard in the United States. The Cubans kill it for its flesh, which is said to be so near like the flesh of chicken in color and flavor, that travelers had often been deceived when they ate it.

But Yankee Doodle had never seen one, nor even heard it spoken of during the time he had been on the island; hence the feeling of horror and fear that crept over him as he lay there on the leaves beside the fallen tree.

He felt his very hair rise on end as the creature crawled along the trunk of the tree until it was almost directly over him. There it stopped, raised its head, and looked to the right and left. It finally looked down at him, and assumed an attitude of timid fear.

But Yankee Doodle thought it was about to spring upon him and, quick as a flash, he shoved the muzzle of his revolver against its head and fired. It gave a jump and fell on the other side of the tree, where he heard it splashing among the leaves for several minutes.

"By George!" he said to himself, "I guess that settled him. Why, it would have killed an elephant at such close range. I would give my share of Weyler's treasure to be out of this, but if I get up and return to the road, I would leave Jack and Joe probably in the same fix and at the same time run the risk of being picked off by that Cuban. It's strange the two shots doesn't bring any response from them, for it seems to me that it ought to bring them back. If the first shot I heard had not been aimed at me I would have thought it came from one of them and would have made my way in the direction of it. It may be that they went there thinking it came from me, and now I've got to wait to see if that pistol shot will bring any response."

So he lay quietly where he was and listened. The horrible creature he had shot was so still and quiet on the other side of the tree he knew it was dead.

Night came on, and the darkness was so intense he could not see his hand when moved within an inch of his face.

"I'm in for it," he muttered, "for now it is too late for me to shift my position. I am going to lie here through the night, because if I attempt to find my way back to the road I will be just as apt to go farther into the woods as to move the other way. As it is, I have a brace of revolvers with which I can defend myself if attacked by man or beast. I have always been told that there are no beasts of prey or venomous serpents in Cuba, and that there was nothing worse or more dangerous to man on the island than the mosquitoes, but that creature I shot seems to give the lie to the whole story."

Hour after hour passed and nothing was heard, not even the rustle of a leaf. The mosquitoes bothered him a good deal, but thousands of fireflies in the forest seemed to be like little twinkling stars. Although he had walked many miles that day and was considerably fatigued, he was very far from feeling sleepy. He finally fell asleep, however, and when he awoke day was dawning.

He was wet to the skin by the heavy dew that had fallen upon him, but that he minded not as he was used to it, but the fact that neither Joe nor Jack had shown up gave him more worry than anything else.

"If they are alive," he said to himself, "they certainly would have fired their rifles or revolvers as a signal to me that we might get together, but only two shots have I heard, one from myself and another from one who shot to kill."

He slowly, cautiously rose to his knees, peered over the log at the great lizard he had killed the evening before, and then rose to his feet.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEADLY SECRET COSTS ANOTHER LIFE—HOW JACK AND JOE WERE LOST.

WHEN he rose to his feet and gazed around at the forest of magnolias Yankee Doodle saw a Cuban about a hundred and fifty yards away, leaning against a tree, his gun resting on the ground, his left hand grasping the barrel near the muzzle.

He was looking up at another tree a little distance away on his left. He couldn't tell at that distance whether or not it was the Cuban who carried the bag along the road the day before. Nevertheless he made up his mind to interview him, even if he had to kill him to do so.

He marked the tree by noticing the shape of its branches, and then dropped down on his hands and knees and crawled forward through the underbrush, in the direction of a huge magnolia about fifty feet away from where he had spent the night.

When he reached the tree he peered around it to see if the Cuban was still where he had last seen him. He was there in the same position, not having moved an inch. He crept on his hands and knees to another tree still nearer to him, where he took another squint at him, and found him still in the same position.

Again he crept forward to a third tree, which would bring him within seventy-five yards of the Cuban, and on reaching that he rose to his feet, examined his rifle and stepped out from behind it in full view of him.

Still the latter appeared not to see him, as he was still gazing up at the foliage of a tree on his left.

Yankee Doodle cocked his rifle and started towards him. He had advanced half a dozen paces when the Cuban saw him and instantly dropped to the ground with the evident intention of lying flat to avoid being seen.

Yankee Doodle dashed forward through the bushes at full speed; when within about thirty paces of where the Cuban lay a bullet whistled by his head. Quick as a flash he returned the fire, aiming at the fellow's shoulder, as he didn't wish to kill him instantly.

The Cuban dropped his rifle and rolled over on the ground. The next moment Yankee Doodle was by his side standing over him.

"Why did you shoot at me?" he asked him.

"Because I thought you were trying to shoot me," was the reply.

"Why did you shoot at me yesterday afternoon?"

"I didn't do it, senor."

"Yes, you did," and he took off his hat, held it up before him and showed the bullet holes made by the bullet that knocked it off his head as he stood on the trunk of the fallen magnolia.

"Now, senor, I was not here yesterday. I came this morning."

Yankee Doodle looked at him closely, and saw he was the same man whom he caught inspecting the old stone bridge so minutely the day before.

"You are lying," he said; "you came here yesterday afternoon, hid your bag in the bushes by the

roadside out there and then spent half an hour inspecting the old stone bridge before you entered these woods."

The fellow was astonished, and said :

"Then you were here, senor?"

"Yes. I was behind you when you and a companion hid in the bushes by the roadside as the Spanish cavalry passed. When you came out again you were alone. I was satisfied you had murdered your comrade, and so I followed to see what you were up to."

The fellow gave him a quick glance, and asked :

"Was that all you followed me for, senor?"

"Yes," was the reply. "Why did you shoot at me?"

"It was not me, senor."

"I know better; it was you—and if you don't tell the truth about it, I'll finish you where you lie;" and he handled his rifle in a threatening way as he spoke.

"I heard the shot, senor," the fellow said, "and laid down in the bushes to avoid being seen, as I didn't know where it came from and didn't care to be picked off by anybody."

"That won't do," and Yankee Doodle shook his head in a positive way.

"It is the truth, senor."

"It is a lie, Cubano."

The fellow said no more for a few minutes, and Yankee Doodle added :

"You may as well tell the truth. You and your comrades made away with one or two others in the woods before you struck the main road, for both of you passed within a few feet of where I stood in the bushes, one of you carrying a bag over his shoulder. I heard the four shots that were fired, and knew that foul play had been going on. My suspicions were confirmed when I saw you resume your journey alone, and you've had two shots at me—and it is now my turn."

"Senor," said the fellow, "is that all you followed me for?"

"Caramba! Is that not enough? You go about shooting men on sight and then ask why you are followed?"

"Senor Americano, there are those who seek my life, and I have done no more than what any other man would do who has been hunted down as I have been. I thought you were one of those who sought to slay me."

"So you did shoot at me then?" said Yankee Doodle.

"Si, senor."

"Very well. Now what have you done that others should seek to slay you?"

"Nothing, senor, save that I hold a secret which they have tried to force from me."

"Oh, come now," said Yankee Doodle, shaking his head, "you can't play that game on me. I hold your life in my hands, and as you have fired at me twice I wouldn't hesitate a moment to finish you on that account."

"It is true, senor."

"What is the secret?" Yankee Doodle asked.

The Cuban turned over on the ground and raised himself to a sitting position against the trunk of the tree. His right arm was useless from the wound in his shoulder, through which the bullet had passed and lodged in the trunk of the magnolia behind him.

As he was making the move to sit up his rifle was lying close by him, but Yankee Doodle kicked it away with his foot for fear he might seize it suddenly and attempt to fire again.

The fellow groaned as if in great pain, as no doubt he was; yet Yankee Doodle kept him covered with his rifle, ready to fire at any moment.

"What is the secret?" he asked again.

The Cuban looked him straight in the eyes for the space of a couple of minutes, and then said:

"It is a secret of a hidden treasure."

"A hidden treasure, eh?"

"Si, senor."

"Where is the treasure?"

"It is in the woods, a mile away from the third block-house on the trocha going southward."

"Do you know where it is?"

"Not exactly, senor, but I have directions by which it could be found."

"Whose treasure is it?"

"It belongs to the Government of Spain."

"How did you get hold of the secret?"

"Through a woman whose husband was killed after it was forced from him."

"Does anybody else know it now beside you?"

"No, senor; I am the last one of four who knew about it."

"Now, tell me," said Yankee Doodle, "why did you come this way?"

"To escape those who were trying to force it from me," he replied.

"Four of you knew about it, did you?"

"Si, senor."

"And two of you killed the other two, so that only two of you had the secret?"

"No, no, senor; they were killed by our pursuers."

"Very well. Your comrade was killed, so that you only have the secret?"

"Si, senor."

"Now, that's a pretty story," remarked Yankee Doodle. "You killed your comrade yourself, for I saw you go into the woods with him and come out alone. Your cupidity urged you to kill him that you might get the treasure yourself. Now, you think that secret is known only to you, and so you have told me a cock-and-bull story about its being buried in the neighborhood of the trocha, a mile from the third block-house, but let me tell you that I know very well that it is not buried at all, but is in the hollow of one of four magnolia trees standing at right angles with each other here in these very woods."

"Caramba!" gasped the Cuban, and the next moment, notwithstanding his wounds, he sprang to his

feet, and with the cry of a demon sought to clutch Yankee Doodle by the throat with his left hand. The latter sprang nimbly aside, utterly astounded at the terrific energy displayed by the wounded villain, who drew his machete that hung to a rude belt around his waist and sought to cut him down.

It was then that Yankee Doodle fired, the muzzle of his rifle being within three feet of the Cuban's breast.

The man fell to the ground with a groan, turned on his back, and, with two or three gasps, was dead.

"Lord!" exclaimed Yankee Doodle, "he was the worst I ever saw. Knowing that he was utterly incapable of successfully attacking me, such was his rage at finding that another had the secret, he threw his life away in an attempt to make the secret die with him."

Yankee Doodle was about to search the clothes of the dead man in the hope of finding some memoranda which would throw some light on the locality of the hidden treasure, when he was startled by a loud whoop about seventy-five yards away in the bushes, followed by a voice, saying:

"Here he is, Jack; here he is!" and the next moment he saw Joe running towards him at full speed.

"Great Scott, Phil," cried Joe, "where have you been? I never was so glad to see you in my life!"

"I haven't been one hundred yards away from this spot, Joe, since I last saw you yesterday."

"The deuce you haven't! Why, Jack and I hunted all through the woods for you. Hello! A dead Cuban," and he turned and looked at the Cuban lying on the ground, with unmixed astonishment.

Before Yankee Doodle could make any explanation, he heard Jack come tearing through the bushes, and again a joyous greeting took place.

"Pard, old man," said Jack as he wrung his hand, "we beat the bushes for you everywhere. We heard your rifle an hour or so after we lost you and tried to get to you, but couldn't. Hello!" and he, too, wheeled and looked at the dead Cuban. "Why, that's the same fellow we saw on the bridge yesterday!"

"Yes," said Yankee Doodle, "he is the same fellow, and it was his rifle, not mine, you heard yesterday, and here is where his bullet went."

He took off his hat and showed them the holes in it.

"Suffering Moses!" exclaimed Jack, "that was a close call, pard."

"So it was," assented Yankee Doodle, "but I have given him a closer one," and then he proceeded to tell them the story of his adventures from the time they parted up till that moment.

"So he had the secret too?" said Jack.

"Yes, four of them had it, but he managed to kill off the other three and was here after it for himself. He evidently intended to hold it against all the world. Now where in creation have you and Joe been?"

Jack then explained that they had wandered about through the woods looking for four magnolia trees standing at right angles to each other ten or twelve feet apart, and had kept it up for an hour or two, not

thinking that they had gone any considerable distance from where they had left him. Finally, when they heard a rifle shot, they thought it was a signal from him that he had found the right tree, but were not exactly certain of the direction from which the sound had come; but they beat around that way as well as they could, thinking every moment that they would hear another shot or else a call. Not hearing from him, however, they kept up the search until night came on and the intense darkness compelled them to lie down and spend the night where it overtook them. When they heard the shots exchanged between him and the Cuban after sunrise they started again to reach him, but not until the third and last shot was heard were they sure of his locality.

"Well, boys," said Yankee Doodle, "if I should live to be a hundred years old I would never expect to pass such a night again as that was. It was well and truly a night of horror for me, for the strange animal I killed was the worst looking thing I have ever seen, and I am puzzled yet to know what it was."

"Where is it?" asked Jack.

"I will show you," he said, "after we have disposed of this body here."

"All right," said Jack, "what shall we do with it?"

"Search it first, and see what we can find on it."

Jack knelt down by the dead Cuban and searched all the pockets of his clothes. He found nothing but some tobacco and a dozen cartridges in one of the pockets.

"This is all, pard," he said.

"Put the tobacco back in his pocket," ordered Yankee Doodle, "and the cartridges in your belt. Then we will throw the body into the stream as we have nothing with which to bury it."

Jack picked up the body and bore it to the banks of the stream, tossed it into the water and it sank out of sight.

"Now come on," said Yankee Doodle, and he led the way to the fallen magnolia where still lay the body of the dead iguana.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Joe, "what is it?"

"Tell me, and I'll tell you," said Yankee Doodle, "for that very question has been passing through my mind every minute since I first saw it. It's a wonder that every hair on my head is not as white as snow."

"It's ugly enough to make a man's hair turn white," said Joe.

"I should say it was; and the worst of it, it was making ready to spring upon me as I lay over there on the other side of the log when I fired. And worse still, I had the excruciating suspense of the whole night, expecting every moment that others like it would pounce upon me."

"We had better throw this in the water too, pard," said Jack, "as in a few hours the heat will cause it to be offensive."

"All right, we'll throw it in, but I'm blest if I care to put my hands on it."

"Oh, we needn't touch it," said Jack, who drew his

knife and cut down a bush, chipped off a forked limb at the lower end of it and sharpened it like a hook.

He fastened it into the mouth of the carcass and thus dragged it down to the water and threw it in.

"Now, boys," said Yankee Doodle, "let us have something to eat, for I'm hungry as a wolf."

"So am I," exclaimed the other two, and they all three proceeded to devour some of the rations they had brought with them.

CHAPTER VIII.

"THAT'S WHERE WE BLUNDERED!"

THE three returned to the roadside for the purpose of making a breakfast of some of the rations they had brought with them, as well as to observe landmarks on the way. As they reached the roadside, Jack suggested that they search for the bag which the Cuban had concealed somewhere in the bushes.

"Breakfast first, Jack," said Yankee Doodle. "I'm hungry; so much so I wouldn't stop to pick up the captain-general's gold if I saw it."

"Then you must be hungry," laughed Jack.

"You can bet your share of the treasure that I am, and that I am going to have something to eat before I do anything else."

"I'm hungry, too," remarked Joe, "and I have a thirst also."

"Oh, there is water enough," said Yankee Doodle; "no trouble about that."

"Will you kindly show it to me?" Joe asked.

"Right under the bridge," said the other.

"Well, I'll wait until I find another stream somewhere before I take a drink of water into which we threw the Cuban and that high land alligator."

"By George! I never thought of that," said Yankee Doodle. "Guess I won't drink any of it myself, unless we go above where we threw them in."

"Of course not," put in Jack, "and even if we do that, it would be bad for us to drink it anyway, for it is nothing but surface drainage, and the whole island is covered with both vegetable and animal decayed matter."

"What in thunder are we to do, then?" Yankee Doodle asked, as he began munching on his rations.

"We've got to hunt for a spring."

"All right; we'll do that after we have eaten," and they went out into the road, strolled over to the bridge, and sat down near it under the shade of a large tree, where they consumed the last of the rations they had brought with them.

They sat there nearly half an hour, eating slowly and conversing in low tones about the terrible adventures of the night through which they had just passed.

When they had finished Joe remarked:

"We are like a trio of tramps who have no idea as to where their next meal is to come from."

"It's not so bad as that," replied Yankee Doodle, "as we have our rifles with which to shoot game."

"So we have," assented Joe, "but where is the game?"

"We've got to hunt for it," was the reply, "just like any other hunters."

"It seems to me we've got a pretty big job on hand," remarked Jack. "First, we've got to hunt water, hunt up a dinner, hunt for the treasure and then search for the Cuban's bag."

"Oh, we can do without that bag," said Yankee Doodle, "for I guess there is nothing in it to pay us for time wasted in hunting for it."

"Say, Phil," said Jack, looking Yankee Doodle straight in the face, "you seem to be losing your grip."

"How so?" Phil asked.

"Why, your adventures last night seem to have rattled you, as you don't reason with your usual clearness. I'm inclined to think that that bag is the first thing we should find, for I am willing to gamble that those fellows had rations in it."

"Level head," exclaimed Joe; "that's just what it is."

"Maybe you're right," laughed Yankee Doodle, "still for all that I don't hanker very much after the rations of such fellows, for they are too hungry to carry any food with them, except inside their stomachs."

Joe and Jack laughed, and the latter remarked:

"Your reasoning powers are coming back, old man."

"I don't think I ever lost them, pard," and with that Yankee Doodle rose to his feet, went up on the bridge and crossed over to the other side, followed by Jack and Joe.

On that side of the stream they noticed a little path leading down below the bridge through the bushes..

"I think we had better follow that path," said Yankee Doodle, "and see where it leads to, for I have the impression on my mind that there is a spring somewhere out there under that hill."

"All right," said Jack, "we can soon find out about it," and the cowboy led the way down the path, followed by the other two.

After going about a hundred yards they came to a bold spring of clear, sparkling water.

"Say, Jack," said Joe, "the old man struck it just right when he said that path would lead us to a spring."

"Yes," assented Jack, plucking a large leaf, with which he improvised a dipper; "if you'll only find the path now that will lead us to those four trees we're looking for, we'll forgive him all the mischief he has ever done."

They were so elated at finding the spring they sat down by it, drank copiously, and waited a half hour before resuming their search for the treasure. After drinking heartily again they returned to the bridge, crossed over to the other side, and again entered the woods.

"Now, look here," said Jack, "let's look around for that bag. We needn't waste much time at it; if

we find rations in it that will save us a deal of time, maybe, in hunting for game."

"All right," assented Yankee Doodle; "we'll try it anyway," and they began beating about among the bushes in search of the bag. They each had the impression that it could not be far from the roadside, as the Cuban himself reappeared within five minutes, when he went into the woods to hide it.

Yet, after a half hour spent in diligent search, they all three reappeared at the roadside empty handed.

"Boys, I'm puzzled," said Yankee Doodle, as he looked at his two comrades.

"What's the matter?" asked Jack.

"These woods seem to be enchanted. We can't find a blamed thing we look for, even when we almost know where it is."

"Oh, thunder!" exclaimed Jack, "you don't believe in such things."

"I never did," he replied, "but all the same it worries me that we three can't find the bag when we know that fellow could not have gone over fifty yards from the roadside to hide it. I am not superstitious that I am aware of, yet this thing bothers me."

"Don't lose your grip, pard," advised Jack, "for it may be that some animal found it last night and dragged it away for the rations that were in it."

"That won't do," laughed Yankee Doodle, "for had there been anything in it that a wild animal would eat he would hardly sling it over his shoulder and carry it home to his wife and children, but would have torn the bag to pieces on the spot and eaten its contents."

"Maybe he did do that," returned Jack, "and was so hungry that he swallowed the bag too."

"Oh, yes," retorted Yankee Doodle, "and I guess the same animal has gnawed down the treasure tree and eaten up the treasure also."

"You're away off there, pard, for there never was any animal created that will do anything more than eat the bark and buds of trees, so you may rest easy on that score. If you give me any more logic like that, Joe, I will have to take you down to the water's edge and put a mud plaster on the back of your neck."

They gave up the search for the bag, and again started up along the banks of the stream, in search of the four magnolias standing at right angles to each other. As they advanced they spread out about fifty feet apart, so as to have a wider range as they advanced.

Before separating, however, they agreed upon signals by which they could communicate with each other.

When Yankee Doodle reached the spot where he had passed the night alongside the fallen magnolia, he stopped and gazed critically at the three magnolias that were still standing, and reasoned that if the fourth one was still erect it would make the square they were looking for.

He was so well convinced he was right, he signaled to Jack and Joe to join him.

"What is it, pard?" they both asked, as they came up.

"Look at those three trees standing there," he answered, pointing to the three magnolias.

"What's the matter with them?" asked Jack.

"There isn't anything the matter with them that I know of, but I want you to tell me what you think about them, if this other one was standing up in its place. Wouldn't it fill the description we are looking for?"

Jack and Joe looked at the fallen tree, and measured with their eyes as nearly as they could the position it had stood in before it was prostrated by the cyclone.

"Hanged if I don't think you're right," said Jack, as he walked around the three trees that were standing, looking up for the hole which the old Cuban had described to them.

Each of the three trees appeared to be perfectly solid, and Jack called his attention to that fact.

"Yes," said Yankee Doodle, "I noticed that yesterday; but what we want to find out now is whether or not the tree which was blown down is the hollow one."

"If it is," remarked Joe, "the hollow must be on the under side of it."

"Exactly," said Yankee Doodle; "that's what we want to find out before going any further."

The three looked at the tree in silence for several minutes, after which Jack made the remark that an ax, pick and shovel were the three implements they were in need of.

"And it is strange," he added, "we never thought to bring them."

"We've got to get 'em," said Yankee Doodle, "as we have nothing with which to dig the earth away except our knives, and they are mighty poor tools for ditching."

"All the same," said Jack, "with time and patience we can dig a pretty big hole with them."

"So we could, but it would take us two or three days to do it, and then, if the tree proved to be the one we were looking for we would have no way of cutting it open to get at the treasure."

"We could whittle the tree up with the knife," said Jack.

"Oh no, my son," said Yankee Doodle, sarcastically. "By the time we had finished the excavation our knives would be so dull we couldn't cut a leaf with them. Then if we left to go after axes, the excavation would excite the curiosity if not the suspicion of anybody who might come this way."

Jack and Joe recognized the force of his logic, and the latter remarked:

"All of which means that we must not do anything until we get axes and spades."

"Right for once," said Yankee Doodle. "That's just what we'll have to do."

"Well," said Jack, "it seems to me that we'd better make sure this is the right tree before we lose any time hunting up axes and spades. We should have

brought an ax with us anyway, because we expected to find the treasure in the hollow of a tree."

"Right again," laughed Yankee Doodle. "The truth is there is where we blundered. Just how we're going to get an ax puzzles me, for not one Cuban family in a thousand ever owned an ax or had any use for one. They use the machete for everything in Cuba, from a spoon to a cross-cut saw."

"Say, pard," said Jack, sitting down on the log with a half woebegone look on his face, "why didn't we think of that before?"

"Ask me something easy," returned Yankee Doodle. "It shows that to make a fortune a man has got to work hard and overcome obstacles that almost make him sick to look at."

CHAPTER IX.

THE BRUSH WITH SPANISH CAVALRY AND HOW IT ENDED.

THE three sat there on the fallen tree for quite a while, discussing the pro and con of the situation.

"The truth is, boys," said Yankee Doodle, "we've got to make another trip, as the Cubans we left behind in the camp will be bothered about our continued absence. We must return to them else they will think some mishap has befallen us, and may leave altogether to secure their own safety. They might wait for us a few days, but no longer. If we go back there we might be able to get an ax or two by sending Manuel through the lines into the city after it, and I am inclined to think it is the only way we can get one."

"I guess you are right, pard," assented Jack. "I don't see any other way we can manage it."

"Then let us be off," said Joe, in a very much disgusted tone of voice.

They again made their way down to the roadside, crossed over the bridge, and went to the spring where they drank copiously of the refreshing water.

"Shall we go back the same way?" Joe asked.

"Of course," answered Yankee Doodle; "we have no time to look up another route."

"All right; let's be off," and they once more returned to the bridge, crossed over, and started off on their return to camp.

"We want to look out now, boys," said Yankee Doodle, "and dodge into the woods if we see anybody coming towards us along the road. We don't want to pick up any trouble that will detain us."

When about half way back to the place where they had struck the main road they noticed a flock of buzzards hovering over the woods on their left.

"Do you know what that means?" Yankee Doodle asked of Joe.

"Yes," he replied; "it means that there is something dead out there."

"Of course. It's one of the two Cubans we followed yesterday."

"Yes, I guess it is—a regular Cuban funeral."

They reached the little trail through which they had come in due time, and entered it to make their

way back to the other road on which lived the old Spaniard, who gave them directions how to find it.

After a four or five mile tramp, they struck the road about a mile below the old man's place, and started eastward in the direction of his house.

"We want to be careful now," warned Yankee Doodle, "for we left the wounded officer there yesterday, and it may be that other Spanish soldiers are about looking for us or for the purpose of taking him back to the city. We must avoid everybody and get back to camp just as quick as we can."

When they came in sight of the house they carefully surveyed the premises, but saw no one save the little children playing about the yard, as on the day before.

"I guess the major has been sent to the city," remarked Yankee Doodle, "so we may as well go ahead."

As on the day before the children rushed into the house when they saw them coming, and a few moments later the old man's daughter appeared at the door and gazed at the three Americans, who raised their hats and bowed very ceremoniously.

She returned the greeting and ran out to the gate, where she called out in Spanish :

"Senor Americano, the major was taken to the city this morning, and soldiers are looking for you."

"Thank you, senorita," said Jack, "we are very much in hopes they will not be able to find us, as we do not wish to have any trouble with them. I hope the major is not seriously hurt."

"He is very badly hurt, senor," she replied. "They forced my father to go to the city with him that he might be questioned by the general about the trouble," and then she asked in English why they did not go to Mariel.

"We found it too dangerous to do so," replied Yankee Doodle, "and are going back."

"Back where?" she asked.

"To the United States."

"Indeed?"

"Yes," he repeated, "for we have failed to meet friends whom we expected to find in this neighborhood."

"How in the world will you get out of Cuba?" she asked.

Yankee Doodle shrugged his shoulders with an expression of doubt on his face.

"I fear you will be caught," she remarked.

"Why should you fear?" she asked, "for we are the enemies of Spain and you are loyal."

"I would be sorry to hear of any harm coming to you three, for you rendered me a great service yesterday."

"Indeed! How? if I may ask?"

"By relieving me of the attentions of the major."

"Oh, I understand," and he laughed. "Sorry you didn't tell us about it yesterday so we could have finished him, for we could have done so with the greatest pleasure had we known that it would please you."

It is always a pleasure to an American gentleman to be of service to one of your sex."

"Thank you," she replied, "I would not have had it go to such an extent as that. As it is I will be relieved of his attentions for some time."

"Why don't you forbid him the house?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"Alas, it is impossible, for they have my father in their power, and so we are forced to submit."

"Ah, senorita, I promise you that if we again meet the major we will settle up the matter with him in such a way that you'll never more be bothered by him. Now, will you kindly tell us how we can find our way back to the great road leading south from the city, without having to grope our way through the forest?"

"Yes, senor; if you will follow the road the way you are going now a little over a mile, you will find a smaller road which turns out on the right. It will lead you to the other road if you follow it, but you will be in constant danger of meeting Spanish soldiers, as there are many farms along the line of the road with a good many houses scattered all the way."

"Thank you very much, senorita; we will take the chances of dodging them, for we can travel twice as fast that way than by going through the forest. And now let me say to you in return for your kindness that if you are in need of protection at any time, nail a little piece of white cloth to that tree out there by the roadside, and we will understand what it means when we pass this way again."

"Oh, I thought you were going to return to the United States," said she with a look of surprise on her face.

"So we are some day, but when we do the flag of Spain will no longer wave over Cuba."

"Senor Americano, that can never be. Spain is too powerful; there are more than fifty thousand soldiers in Havana now."

"That may be true, senorita, but fifty thousand Spanish soldiers would be a mere bagatelle for the American army to dispose of. Spain is three thousand miles away from Cuba; the United States is less than one hundred. We can cover the island with armies that will sweep Spain into the sea, and we are going to do it quickly."

"And when you do, Senor Americano, who will rule Cuba?"

"Why, the people of Cuba themselves," he replied, "for we Americans believe that the people of every country should have the right to govern themselves, just as the people in Spain do, without paying tribute to any other nation on earth. Have you never been to the United States, senorita?"

"No, senor."

"Then you have missed seeing the most wonderful country on earth. We number seventy millions of people, all of whom are happy and contented, for they have no one to interfere with them or make them afraid. Our government is of our own making, and the hills and valleys teem with churches

and school-houses, while railroads and steamboats go in every direction. Our treasury is overflowing with gold, and we are rated as the richest nation on earth. We mean to expel Spain from Cuba in order to put a stop to Spanish oppression which causes revolution, interferes with commerce and shocks the sensibilities of the world by the barbarities perpetrated by both Spaniards and insurgents."

"Say, pard," said Jack, "sorry to interrupt you, but a squad of Spanish cavalry is coming down the road."

"The deuce you say," exclaimed Yankee Doodle, running out to where Jack was standing in order to get a view of the road in the direction of the city.

There, much to his surprise, he saw a party of twelve or fifteen Spanish cavalry coming towards him at a brisk trot.

"Boys," said he, "we must break for the woods," and with that he made a dash across an opening a couple of hundred yards wide, directly in front of the house.

The Spaniards saw them and began firing, at the same time urging their horses at full speed in pursuit. Mauser bullets whistled all around the three, but luckily no one was hit.

They gained the timber at a time when the cavalry were less than one hundred yards away from them.

"Now, boys," said Yankee Doodle, "let us show them how dangerous it is to chase American boys that way," and with that he raised his rifle as he stood behind a tree and fired.

One of the cavalrymen tumbled out of his saddle. Almost at the same instant Jack and Joe blazed away with the same result.

"Give 'em another!" called Yankee Doodle, and three more shots emptied as many saddles.

The loss of six of their number seemed to stagger the cavalrymen. They stopped and looked at the young lieutenant who was in command of them.

They heard the young officer order them to charge, and just as they were about to do so three more saddles were emptied, whereupon the others wheeled and rode back in the direction of the house with all the speed their horses could put up.

"Say, pard," sung out Jack, "here are horses to spare; why should we walk back to camp?"

"Yes, why should we?" asked Joe.

"We may have to keep in the woods," said Yankee Doodle.

"Well, that's all right," returned Jack, "if we have to take to the woods it will be easy enough to do so. It has been a long time since I was in a saddle."

"Get your horse, then," said Yankee Doodle, and the three emerged from the timber and proceeded to secure three horses.

Yankee Doodle sprang upon one of them, and called out to the others to follow him. They did so, and in a few moments were dashing up the road at a lively rate of speed.

The survivors of the fight had gone the other way.

"Look out for the other road now, boys," said Yankee Doodle, as they rode forward.

In a very few minutes they came to where a much smaller road branched off to the right. They turned into it, and rode as fast as they thought their horses could go.

"By George, Jack, old man," said Yankee Doodle, "this is better than tramping."

"You bet it is," he replied. "I never like to walk when I can ride."

After going a mile or so, they passed a farm-house which was evidently deserted, as they saw no one about the premises. A half mile farther on they came to a little collection of four or five houses, where they saw quite a lot of children and several women. They dashed by without stopping, the women and children gazing after them in open-eyed wonder.

Several other houses, large and small, were passed without their seeing any one whom they had any reason to fear or avoid.

"We can't be very far away from the main road now," Yankee Doodle remarked to Jack.

"Not very far," answered Jack, "but we are not out of the woods yet."

Being the best rider of the three Jack forged ahead with his rifle lying across his lap. Suddenly they saw a party of Spanish cavalry who were dismounted in front of a farm-house. They were evidently in search of food, and had no expectation of being disturbed by an enemy.

"Hold up, pard," said Jack, "or we'll run into a hornet's nest."

"No danger of that," returned Jack. "We can get past them before they can get their breath," and with that he dashed on with a daring recklessness that forced Yankee Doodle and Joe to follow him, or else leave him to face the danger alone.

They dashed on after him, and were almost alongside of the cavalry horses before the dismounted cavalrymen were aware of their presence.

The Spaniards turned and looked at them in astonishment, wondering who they were. They were going so fast the soldiers were utterly unable to make them out, hence not a shot was fired at them, and in another minute or two they were out of sight in the bend of the road.

The officer in command of the cavalry immediately ordered a mount and dashed off in pursuit. When they turned the bend of the road where they had last seen the three horsemen they came in sight of them half a mile away.

"They are coming for us, pard," laughed Jack, as he looked back over his shoulder.

"Let 'em come," said Yankee Doodle, "but we'll have to dismount at the first patch of woods that offers us a good shelter, or else we will lead them too close to our camp."

CHAPTER X.

ONCE MORE IN CAMP—OUR HEROES BUILD AIR CASTLES IN THE BUSHES.

THEY dashed on about a quarter of a mile further to where the road ran through a piece of heavy timber, and there dismounted and led their horses into the bushes. Then they opened fire on their pursuers with their Winchesters. Each being a dead shot, no ammunition was wasted, and in less than sixty seconds the Spaniards knew they had run up against a very bad thing.

Still they relied upon superiority of numbers, and actually rode up to the very spot where the three had entered the woods. There they delivered a volley of nearly a score of rifle shots without doing any damage to anything but the trees.

The three Americans, however, kept popping away at them until nearly a dozen had been knocked out. By that time the Spaniards had dismounted and entered the wood, as though determined that the three men should not get the best of them.

"Come, boys," said Joe to Yankee Doodle, "there's no use staying here. There are too many of them, and the next thing we know we'll get mixed up with them."

"Come ahead," said Yankee Doodle, leading off through the woods parallel to the road.

Fortunately they were not seen by the Spaniards, and so they got away without being pursued. Their three horses were captured, and the captors believing the riders were nearby, confined themselves to beating the bushes in the vicinity.

Pretty soon they were enabled to strike the road again, along which they traveled at a pretty fast gait until they had placed a mile between them and the enemy.

"We got out of that pretty well, boys," said Yankee Doodle.

"The deuce we did," said Jack. "We lost our horses."

"Oh, well," laughed Yankee Doodle, "they didn't belong to us anyway, and as they outnumbered us about ten to one, you ought to be satisfied that we didn't lose more."

"Well, I am not," returned Jack; "that was a pretty good horse I had and I wanted to keep him."

"Oh, that's nonsense, we can't keep any horses on this trip, because we have to dodge about through the woods too much."

"Well, I can take care of a horse, and dodge about through the woods, too."

"Maybe you can," was the reply, "but Joe and I can't."

They soon became satisfied that the Spaniards were still looking for them in the woods, as they saw no evidence of further pursuit, so they pushed on at a more leisurely pace, until they came in sight of another farm-house. There they made their way around unperceived, keeping in the bushes to avoid being seen by anybody who could give information of their presence in the vicinity.

Presently they struck another great road, which they supposed to be the one they were in search of. They stopped in the bushes to get their bearing.

"It must be that we are between our camp and the city," said Yankee Doodle, "because the road we were in was between us and the route we took when we first started out yesterday morning."

"You're right, pard," said Jack, "and we can soon find the place where the old man with the secret was murdered."

"Would you know the place?" Joe asked.

"Of course I would."

"Lead the way then," said Yankee Doodle, "but keep pretty close in the bushes, for I want to find some of our fellows before we are seen by anybody else."

Jack led the way down the road, keeping close enough to the bushes on the right hand side to be able to dodge into them at a moment's warning. They traveled that way a couple of miles when they suddenly ran into three of their Cubans, who sprang up and greeted them with a great deal of satisfaction.

"We thought something had happened to you, senor," said one of them to Yankee Doodle.

"Oh, no," was the reply; "we simply got too far away to get back last night. What's the news?"

"Two of our men have been captured."

"How did that happen and when?"

"They were captured by a party of cavalry yesterday afternoon, on a road leading out to the left from this one two miles above here."

"Great Scott, pard!" exclaimed Joe, on hearing that, "it is the very road we have just left!"

"So it is," assented Yankee Doodle, who proceeded to question the Cuban as to how the disaster happened.

They told him that the cavalry had come upon them so suddenly they had no way of escaping.

"Do you know what became of them?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"They were shot, senor."

"Shot?"

"Si, senor, at sunrise this morning, as one of our men who was prowling around their camp discovered soon after hearing the shots."

"That's bad," said Yankee Doodle, shaking his head, "and it shows you fellows that it is better to die fighting than to surrender or be captured. We had thirty men after us this morning, but we threw them off after killing nearly a dozen of them, and I guess it is the same party who did that shooting. Have you seen anything of Manuel?"

"Si, senor; he is at the camp now. He came in early this morning."

"Did he bring any news?"

"I think he did, senor, but he will give it to no one but you."

"All right; that shows he has a level head."

"How far are we from the camp now?"

"About half a mile, senor."

"All right; we'll go then. You three had better stay here and keep a watch on the road."

They hurried down the road, and had not gone more than a few hundred yards when Jack recognized the landmark of the spot where the old Cuban soldier had been murdered for his secret. Yankee Doodle and Joe recognized it also when he pointed it out to them.

Of course they knew then where they were, and had no difficulty in going straight to the little camp, where they found Manuel and five of the Cubans waiting for them.

"I was afraid something had happened to you, senor," said Manuel.

"Thank you, old man. I'm glad that nothing has happened to you. How did you find things in the city?"

"I found the soldiers all very busy, senor. Blanco has them all at work fortifying every inch of ground from the water's edge on the east to the seashore on the west side, and they're making them strong, too."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that," remarked Yankee Doodle.

"Why, so, senor?" Manuel asked, in a rather surprised tone of voice.

"Because it means that they intend to stay there and defend it."

"Of course, senor, and with such works as they are building they will be able to defend it."

"You forget, old man," returned Yankee Doodle, smilingly, "that with the fleet on the water side and an American army on this side, we can capture the city without firing a gun."

A look of incredulity on the face of Manuel and his comrades caused the three Americans to break into a hearty laugh.

"I don't understand you, senor," said the old Cuban shaking his head.

"Well, I'll explain to you. With an army on the land side and a fleet in front of the city how will Blanco be able to feed his army? He will have to come out from behind his breastworks to fight us, or die of starvation in the trenches. Do you understand me now?"

"Si, senor. They will come out and fight, for they have a large army."

"If they do we will lick 'em," said Joe, "for in an open field the Americans can thrash them with but very little trouble."

"Now, I want to have you go back to the city, Manuel, to get me a couple of axes. Do you think you can do it?"

"I can go back to the city," he replied, "but whether I can find any axes or not I don't know."

"Well, I'll tell you how you can find an ax. The Cubans do not use them as a general thing, but there are English, German and French families there, many of whom keep business houses that have such things for sale to their countrymen. Find some of those people and tell them what you want and you'll be

able to get it. When you get it, lose no time in returning. If you can find a shovel or a hoe, get one. Here is the money with which to pay for them. It is very important that you get them."

"I will get them, senor," said the old Cuban, "if it is possible for them to be had."

"I know that well enough, old man," and Yankee Doodle handed him ten pesos in Spanish gold, with instructions to lose as little time as possible in getting away.

As soon as Manuel was gone Yankee Doodle turned to the other four Cubans and said that he wanted two of them to make their way down to the coast east of Cienfuegos, and there signal to any American craft and get aboard as quickly as possible with a letter to General Shafter at Santiago.

"When the captain of the craft understands that it is a dispatch to the general he will land you there as quickly as he can."

He then sat down with his pencil and notebook, and for the next half hour was engaged in writing a report to General Shafter. When he had finished he sealed it up, addressed it properly and gave it to the two Cubans, with a certain amount of money to bear any expense that might be incurred on the trip.

The two fellows then went away, leaving only two of their number behind them. Soon after their departure Jack came to Yankee Doodle and said:

"Pard, I have found out something about the two Cubans whom we found going along the road with the Cuban woman and her two daughters."

"What is it?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"They are the two fellows who were killed by the Spaniards."

"Oh, ho," and Yankee Doodle whistled. Then he added:

"I'll wager my head that the women were the cause of their taking off."

"I wouldn't bet against it, pard," remarked Jack, "for they are generally at the bottom of a fellow's troubles."

"How did you find it out?" Yankee Doodle asked him.

"Simply by asking where they were, as I happened to have their names, and when they told me that they were the ones who had been captured by the Spaniards, I then understood the whole thing."

"Yes, yes," said Yankee Doodle, "there is no need of asking any more questions about them, for a similar fate befell the major and his two comrades yesterday morning, you know. If he hadn't been paying his devotions to that old fellow's daughter none of them would have been hurt. As it is, the major is wounded and the other two are dead."

The three then set about satisfying their hunger with the rations that had been left in camp. They were to stay there until Manuel returned from the city with the axes, so during that time they would have very little to do.

When the others came in Yankee Doodle instructed them that they were to be more cautious than ever in

their efforts to avoid being seen by any one. He told them that he didn't wish their presence in the vicinity to become known to either friend or foe while they were there.

"For," said he, "if they begin to search for us we will have to leave here and pitch a camp somewhere else, which might not be as convenient for us as the one we now have."

They spent the night in the camp, and the next morning went out to the roadside, concealed themselves in the bushes to watch the people who were coming and going pretty nearly all the time.

Twice they saw parties of Spaniards pass, and from remarks that were overheard, they understood that one of the party belonged to the one who had attacked them just before they reached the main road.

When they had passed Jack stated that he recognized the horse he had lost in that fight.

"I would have given fifty dollars, pard," he said to Yankee Doodle, "for a chance to shoot that fellow out of the saddle."

"We can't always do as we please, old man," laughed Yankee Doodle, "for I must confess to an itching desire to try my Winchester on them also—and I hope we'll have a chance to do so after we have settled up that other little matter over by the old stone bridge."

"Oh, well now, pard, if we settle that matter up to our satisfaction, I would much rather be in New York or Chicago than in Cuba."

"Why so?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"Because I could then have more fun than ever before in my life. They are both big cities, but I'd paint 'em both red. There's no red paint in Cuba."

"Very true," laughed Yankee Doodle, "but you can kill a man in Cuba without being hanged for it, which you can't do in New York or Chicago."

"Oh, I'd go out of the killing business, pard."

"I've no doubt you think you would, but you'd kill yourself in less than one year."

"Think I'd commit suicide, eh?"

"No, I don't think you would blow your brains out or cut your throat, but I do think that you would have a bad case of the jimmies, and when the monkeys chased you through a ten story window you would be flattened out on the stone pavement."

"There's where you're away off, pard, for I am not given much to drink. But I'd buck the tiger, back the fastest horses and wear the finest clothes that could be built anywhere in the United States."

"How do you think you would come out with the tiger?"

"Oh, I can hold my own with him. I've met him a great many times, and many a time got the best of him."

"Then you can just bet your life," laughed Joe, "that the tiger would give you some knock-out drops and you would wake up some morning to find yourself with less money in your pocket than you've got now."

"Say, pard," said Jack, turning suddenly upon Joe, "what will you do with your share if we get it?"

"Why, I'd go back home and invest every dollar of it in New York real estate, live in a fine house, keep a horse and carriage for mother and sister, and two of the best rooms will belong to you and Phil here whenever you come around."

"Give me your hand on that, old man," said Yankee Doodle, extending his hand to Joe. "That's just what I would do—only I'd buy a fine drum for myself and a fife for you."

"Good," said Joe, "and we would still show the boys that we yet know how to pan out martial music when it is wanted."

CHAPTER XI.

THE WHITE RAG SIGNAL AND WHAT IT MEANT.

The three spent the greater part of the day in the woods by the roadside building air castles. Many parties passed along the road during the time going to or from the city, but our heroes made no effort to molest them. They were simply waiting and watching, and at the same time building air castles more beautiful than any they had ever heard of in Spain.

As the day waned they returned to the camp, consumed their share of the rations, and retired to their hammocks, which were swung side by side, where they spent the night sleeping and dreaming.

When they awoke the next morning, they were very much surprised to find Manuel and his comrade lying asleep on their blankets, with a spade and a couple of axes lying on the ground near them. Joe was the first to make the discovery.

He reached over and tapped Yankee Doodle and Jack on the shoulder, which awoke them. He silently pointed to the two axes and the spade, with a grin of intense satisfaction on his face.

The two quietly shook hands, whilst Yankee Doodle whispered:

"Mum's the word."

The two Cubans slept some two or three hours later, as it was near daylight when they came in, but when they awoke, Manuel said to Yankee Doodle:

"Senor, we got two axes and a spade."

"So I see, old man. I knew you could do it. Now I want you and the others to stay here and take care of the camp until we three return."

"How long will you be gone, senor?"

"I don't know, Manuel. We may return in two days, and yet we may be gone four or five. You must not go far away from the camp, and above all things, you must avoid being seen by friend or foe. If your rations give out, try to supply your needs without incurring discovery."

The three men took the axes and the spade and left the little camp. Prudence suggested to them that after they crossed the little road they keep well in the woods to avoid being seen, as it was pretty certain the Spaniards were scouring the country in search of them.

"We have plenty of time," said Yankee Doodle,

"for if we do not reach there to-night it will make no difference."

"All right, pard," said Jack; "we'll try to go the same way we went on the first trip. We are not likely to meet anybody on that route, unless it be at the house where we struck the major, and if anybody is there, it will be easy enough to go around and keep out of his way."

It was a little after noon when they came in sight of the old Spaniard's home. They stopped at a safe distance from it, whilst Jack went forward to see if anybody was about. He was gone about twenty minutes or so, and returned with the report that he could see no one at all about the place."

"I guess they have moved away," said Yankee Doodle, "but it is strange that the children should be gone too, as they certainly belong to one of the tenant families."

They boldly entered the road and were about to pass the house, when Yankee Doodle saw a piece of white cloth nailed up against one of the trees near the gate at the roadside.

"Hello, boys!" he said, coming to a sudden halt. "Look at that rag up there," and he pointed to the bit of white cloth on the tree.

They remembered that he had told the daughter of the old Spaniard that if she needed help she could let them know it by placing that signal there.

"Something has happened," said Jack.

"Yes," assented Yankee Doodle, "and that bit of white cloth is the appeal of a helpless woman for assistance or protection, and I am not the man to refuse it."

"Neither am I, pard," said Jack, "but where the deuce is she?"

"That we must find out," and Yankee Doodle advanced to the front of the house and knocked on the door with the butt of his rifle.

He received no response. Jack and Joe went around the house to the door and windows in the rear. They soon became convinced that no one was within. Then they looked in the direction of the tenant houses in the rear of the main one, only to find them deserted also.

"They've all gone, pard," said Jack, returning to the front of the house where Yankee Doodle was trying to force the door.

"It seems so," was the reply; "but I'd like to find out whether or not anybody has been hurt, which we can do only by getting inside the house."

"It seems to me," said Jack, "they have merely locked up and gone away for the day, because, if they had been ordered to the city to stay, we would hardly find the doors and windows fastened as they are, as the Spaniards generally apply the torch. They were here yesterday, but now they are gone."

"Hello!" said Joe, "I see a signal!"

"Where?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"In the bushes down that way," and he pointed across a clearing below the house, in the direction

of the woods in which the fight took place with the major and his two comrades several days before.

As the three were gazing in that direction they saw what seemed like a small white handkerchief signaling to them from a thick clump of bushes.

"By George, boys!" said Yankee Doodle, "we must investigate that and see what it means."

"We had better be careful," cautioned Joe, "as it may be a trap by the enemy."

"I'll take the chances on that," said Yankee Doodle, starting forward.

"So will I," added Jack.

They hurried down the road, Jack in advance. As he plunged into the clump of bushes, he saw the old Spaniard's daughter reeling towards him, crying out:

"Thank God, you've come at last!"

He caught her in his arms and held her up, for she was almost on the verge of a swoon.

"By all the saints, senorita," he exclaimed, "tell me what has happened?"

"A file of soldiers came out last night, senor," said she, "to arrest us all and take us to the city. I made my escape under the cover of the darkness, and spent the night here in the woods."

"All alone?" he asked.

"Yes, all alone. I thought I would not survive the night, but I did, and this morning I crept back to the house, tore off a piece of my handkerchief and fastened it to the tree, after which I came back here, not daring to stay at the house lest the soldiers come out and find me there."

"They are coming now," said Joe, looking back towards the house at a party of half a dozen soldiers who had just reached there.

"Oh, Senor Americano, I would rather die than fall into their hands!"

"There is no danger of your falling into their hands, senorita," said Jack, "for there are only half a dozen of them, and we three can take care of them without any trouble at all."

"That's so," said Yankee Doodle to Jack. "Step outside there in the clearing so they can see you. They will come after you, and then we can attend to them when they come up to you. If they see us now they will take refuge in the house where we can't see them. That is what I wish to avoid."

She stepped out into the clearing in full view of half a dozen Spaniards who were searching for her. She was soon seen, and the entire party came running towards her. When they were within a few feet of her she became suddenly panic-stricken and darted into the bushes, where Yankee Doodle, Jack and Joe were concealed.

"Caramba!" exclaimed the Spanish sergeant who was in command of the little party. "Stop, senorita, or we will fire!"

The next instant three pistol shots rang out, and three Spaniards reeled backward out of the bushes and fell to the ground. In less than three seconds

three more shots were fired, and the other three joined their comrades.

The firing was at such close range that none of them who had been hit lived five minutes.

"It's awful, senorita," said Yankee Doodle, "but it is better thus than to have them return to the city and report our presence here, as in that event your home would probably be destroyed. As it is, we will bury these fellows, and their officers will never know what became of them."

They procured the spade which they had brought with them, and inside of an hour the three Spaniards were buried out of sight and the spot covered with leaves so as to conceal it from any casual passer-by.

In the meantime the young girl, accompanied by Jack, at her request, returned to the house, where she showed him how to open the back door.

When she entered she proceeded at once to procure some papers from a chest belonging to her father, which she concealed in the bosom of her dress. Then she hastily gathered up her jewels from a place of concealment in the wall of one of the rooms, after which she tied up a bundle of clothing, which she stuffed into a small bag.

When she had done that she turned to Jack, and said :

"Now, senor, where you three go there will I go also, for in all Cuba you are the only ones to whom I can look for protection."

"You shall have that protection, senorita, just as long as we can give it; and you can bet your life we'll take care of you as long as one of us can fire a shot."

"I believe you, senor, for I have heard much of the chivalry of the Americanos; I am not afraid to risk honor and life in your hands. But, senor, I am almost starved. I don't know whether or not they have left anything to eat in the house. I will look and see;" and she went into another room whilst Jack stepped out to see whether or not the coast was clear.

He saw no one coming and was about to re-enter the house when he heard a glad cry from within. The girl had found the food supply of the house untouched, and it was quite ample, as Jack found when he examined it.

When he told her there was no more likelihood of any more Spaniards appearing until a reasonable time had been allowed for those who had already come out to return to the city, she prepared quite a feast for the three Americans out of the supplies in the house.

When Yankee Doodle and Joe returned Jack hastily informed them of the situation, adding that the girl had expressed a determination to go with them.

"Great Scott!" said Yankee Doodle in an undertone, "that's bad for us in our search for Weyler's gold."

"It can't be helped, pard," said Jack; "we've got to take care of her and keep her out of reach of the Spaniards."

"Of course," assented Yankee Doodle, "we couldn't think of doing otherwise."

A little later while they were partaking of the food

set out for them, she informed Yankee Doodle, in answer to a question by him, that if she could reach the home of an aunt of hers some thirty miles away in the province of Rio del Pinar she would be safe enough.

"Then we will go there, senorita," he replied, "but you will have to pilot the way for us."

"I can do that easily enough," said she, "for I was there three years ago."

A little while after that Joe made the discovery that the Spaniards had hitched their horses in the woods by the roadside above the house.

"That's what I call good luck, pard," said Jack, "for we will take those horses along with us. The trip will be a picnic, while on foot it would have been pretty tough on us."

In less than half an hour the horses were secured and the young girl placed on one of them, after the house had been again closed in a manner to preclude suspicion that it had been entered.

They traveled about fifteen miles in a south westerly direction before they struck the boundary line of Rio del Pinar province.

They spent the night at a little village, and early the next morning resumed the journey, reaching their destination in the middle of the afternoon.

The little village in which the girl's aunt lived had not been visited by the Spanish soldiers since the revolution began, and the insurgents had committed very few depredations in that vicinity.

Her relative received her joyfully, but was overwhelmed with grief at the calamity that had befallen her brother. She was apprehensive at first that her niece would be pursued by the Spaniards, but Yankee Doodle told her that just now Blanco had something else to do; that since the United States had taken a hand in the fight he was concentrating all his strength for the defense of Havana.

That reassured her and she invited them to remain at her home until the next day. They did so, and the next morning took leave of her and the senorita, promising to let the latter know if it was possible for them to do so, whether or not the Spaniards had returned to destroy her home.

"Now, boys," said Yankee Doodle, as they mounted their horses and rode away, "we must find our way back to the old stone bridge and manage in some way to keep these horses, for if we are successful in our enterprise we will need them."

"Of course we will," said Jack, "and there will be no trouble in keeping them if we keep out of the way of the enemy, for they can always find provender enough in a country like this where grass grows thirteen months in the year."

They were so eager to get back to the old bridge they rode very hard and came in sight of Mariel quite a while before nightfall. They were forced, however, to cut across the country to avoid getting too close to that town where a considerable Spanish garrison held the defenses.

By the time they struck the road again they were

within a couple of miles of the old bridge, but at the same time night overtook them. As there are no twilights in Cuba, darkness came on quickly. They didn't mind that, however, for the road is smooth and wide between Mariel and the capital.

They pushed on until they struck the old bridge, crossed over to the other side, dismounted, and led their horses down to the spring, where they encamped for the night.

"It has been pretty tough on the horses, boys," said Yankee Doodle, "but it was necessary we should get here to-night. To-morrow they will have a rest while we go up to the four magnolias and resume the search for the hollow tree."

They were well satisfied with what they had done, and lay down to sleep in their blankets. During the night they heard a troop of cavalry pass over the bridge, going in the direction of Havana, and thought it very lucky indeed that it was night instead of day, for by daylight many would doubtless have gone to the spring for a taste of its sparkling water.

Early the next morning they arose from their blankets, rolled them up, and concealed them in the bushes. At the same time they led their horses farther back from the spring to avoid the possibility of their presence being discovered.

After that they gathered up their two axes and spade, and started out for the old bridge.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

THEY entered the woods just above the bridge and proceeded up on the right bank of the stream to the fallen magnolia. Without wasting any time they proceeded at once to cut away the bushes that grew along on either side of the prostrate tree to enable them to get at it with the spade. Jack was the first to begin excavating, which he did, beginning at a distance of about ten feet from the root of the tree and going five or six feet alongside of it. The earth was yielding, and he threw the dirt at a lively rate.

"It's a pity we haven't got another spade," remarked Yankee Doodle, as he looked on.

"Oh, one is enough," replied Jack, "as we can take turns at it and keep this one spade hot."

After working for about a half hour he handed the spade to Yankee Doodle, who took his place and proceeded to throw dirt vigorously. Inside of another half hour he was relieved by Joe, and so the work went on for a couple of hours, by which time they had quite a ditch dug alongside the fallen tree for a distance of about six feet and a depth of two.

Then Yankee Doodle passed his hand along under the tree in search of the hole that led to the hollow.

"By George!" he exclaimed, "this is the tree!"

"Are you sure of it?" Jack asked, leaping down into the ditch and running his hand along under the log, where he felt the hollow they were in search of.

"I believe you are right, pard!" he exclaimed, and then Joe leaped down in order to satisfy himself.

"Say!" exclaimed Jack, as he seized one of the

two axes, "get out of the way now and watch the chips fly!"

He sprang up on the log and began cutting with all the energy and skill of an experienced woodchopper. The chips flew at a lively rate, while Yankee Doodle and Joe stood by looking on, in a state of suppressed excitement.

By and by Yankee Doodle asked the cowboy to let him relieve him for a while.

"All right," said Jack, stopping and handing him the ax.

He struck some two or three blows, when Jack burst into a hoarse laugh.

"What are you laughing at?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"Say," returned Jack, "that's the first chopping you ever did in your life, isn't it?"

"Yes, why?"

"I thought so, for you handled the ax like a woman. Let me have it and I'll go through that log before you could get out a chip."

"All right," laughed Yankee Doodle, handing him the ax.

Jack resumed chopping, and in less than five minutes struck the hollow. He turned around and began on the other side, making the chips fairly fly.

In a little while he struck the hollow on that side, and then began cutting lower down.

"Are you going to cut it in two?" Joe asked him.

"We've got to," he answered.

"Why so?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"Why, so we can get at the hollow, and then we must cut it in two down near the butt."

"What's the use of that?"

"Why, thunder, man! we've got to split the log open in order to get at what's in it, and that can't be done unless we cut it at both ends."

"Well, go ahead, that's more chopping than I thought we would have to do."

"Oh," laughed Jack, "you thought that if we cut a little hole in the side of it, the stuff would jump out like a rabbit, but it won't do anything of the kind."

"Well, now, I'm glad you told me so, for it's well enough to know a few things."

"You bet it is," returned Jack, giving the few last blows which severed the great tree where he was chopping.

"Hold on now," said Yankee Doodle, "let me run my hand in there and see if I can feel anything." and he leaped down into the ditch and was about to run his hand into the hollow, when Jack called to him:

"Keep your hand out of there, pard."

"What's the matter?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"There may not be anything the matter," was the reply, "but it's just the place that snakes crawl into. You might get hold of something in there that you were not feeling for."

Yankee Doodle leaped out of the ditch with the remark:

"I didn't think of that."

"I thought you didn't," said Jack, "and that's why I stopped you. It's never safe to be running your hand into a hollow that you know nothing about, for I've known men to make the acquaintance of rattlers in that way."

"Oh, there are no rattlesnakes in Cuba," said Yankee Doodle.

"No, but you've already struck one animal that you know nothing about; but I suppose it makes very little difference to you whether you are killed or scared to death."

"Of course not, but I hardly think I am one to be killed that way. At the same time I'm willing to wait until you cut it in two at the lower end."

Jack began about ten feet below, which was pretty close to the butt of the tree, where the log was a great deal thicker.

He made the chips fly, and Yankee Doodle and Joe stood out in front of him, watching eagerly for the first glimpse of the hollow, knowing that if the treasure they were in search of was there they would soon see it.

By and by Jack stopped to take a rest. The perspiration was pouring down his face and neck, for in that climate very little exertion is required to open every pore in one's body.

Suddenly the ax dropped from his hand.

"Hand me the other one, pard," he said, and Joe reached for the other ax and passed it up to him.

He resumed cutting, after a rest of about five minutes, and kept the chips flying for at least a quarter of an hour longer.

Suddenly the blade sank in deep, and he exclaimed: "I've struck the hollow, pards." He drew the ax out and Yankee Doodle knelt down and peered into the little crevice, but could see nothing.

He ran a stick in, and at a distance of some six inches struck a hard substance.

"Get out o' the way," ordered Jack, "what's the use of bothering with that little crack, when we can cut the blamed thing in two?"

Some ten or fifteen minutes more of hard chopping cut a hole as large as a man's head. Then he dropped the ax, laid down on the log, reached in with his right hand and drew out a canvas bag that was very heavy and covered with mold.

"There you are, pard," said he, tossing the bag over at the feet of Yankee Doodle, who dropped on his knees, knife in hand and ripped it open.

It was filled with Spanish gold; pesos and double-loons.

He sprang up, extended his hand to Jack, exclaiming:

"Pard, we've struck it!"

All three clasped hands and rejoiced over their good fortune, after which Jack again inserted his right hand into the orifice and drew out another bag.

"Look out for snakes, pard!" warned Yankee Doodle.

"Oh, snakes be blowed!" he replied. "If there

were any in here they would have gone out at the upper end," and he jerked out a third bag.

"You seem to know all about snakes," laughed Yankee Doodle.

"You can bet your life I do!" and with that he drew out a fourth bag, after which he said:

"That's as far as I can reach, pard."

"What are we to do, then?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"Cut the log in two and split it," returned Jack, and he leaped upon the trunk of the fallen tree again, spat in his hand, and resumed the chopping on the other side of it.

It took him nearly half an hour to cut through to the hollow on that side, and still longer to sever it where it touched the ground. When that was done, they were compelled to cut three crow-bars from smaller trees for the purpose of rolling the log away so they could look into it.

They managed to roll it over so that the bottom side was uppermost. Then they used one of the crow-bars as a sort of ramrod, in the hope of being able to push out the bags from the inside of the hollow.

"You can't do that, pard," said Jack, "because the inside of the hollow is too rough; we've got to split the log," and with that he seized the ax, stood on one end of the log and began striking his best blows.

After he had given a half dozen powerful strokes he stopped, looked at Yankee Doodle, and said: "This is the toughest log I ever tackled, pard."

"I guess it's the first magnolia that you ever stuck an ax into," returned Yankee Doodle.

"So it is, and I'll always be willing to bet that the grain of the magnolia is built on the principle of a barbed wire."

"What's to be done then?" Joe asked.

"Cut it in two again," he answered. "I'll chop the blamed thing into chips," and he went at it again to cut the log in two at the middle.

While he was doing that Joe used one of the crow-bars to prod the hollow of the stump of the tree, and there he unearthed two more bags, which were so covered with mold that they had not been observed.

"This is six bags," he said, as he tossed them out.

"Look and see if there are more," advised Jack, as he went on with the chopping.

They prodded deeper in the stump, but found nothing more of value.

When the hollow was reached at the middle where Jack was chopping, a bright yellow metal was revealed where the ax had cut into a bag.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, "it's packed full, wedged in tight."

He cut about a foot farther away and soon opened the log some twelve or fifteen inches, through which they drew out bag after bag, every one exactly the same size, until both pieces of the log were empty of their contents.

Jack hefted one of the bags and seemed to be making a mental calculation as to its weight.

"It's pretty heavy," he said.

"What do you think it will weigh?" Yankee Doodle asked.

"Hanged if I know," he replied, "but there's a snug little fortune in each bag, and now we want to get them away from here just as fast as we can."

"Of course we do, but how are we going to do it?"

"Hanged if I know; we made the mistake in not bringing bags with us for that purpose."

"Well," said Yankee Doodle, "the thing for us to do is, for each one to take a bag with him and bury the others somewhere else until we can come and get them. Even if we had a bag in which to put them, it would be impossible for us to get through the country without exciting suspicion. Each one of us already has a canvas money belt. We can fill them and the two holsters on our saddles, and by that way get through without being suspected."

"Level head, pard," said Jack; "that's just what we will do, but we must take them away from here to bury them."

Each one opened and filled a bag and his money belt with its contents, after which one was sent back to the spring below the bridge for the holster, which had been concealed with their saddles in the woods up on the hillside.

Joe was the one who went after them. He returned in about thirty minutes and found Yankee Doodle alone by the fallen magnolia.

"Where's Jack?" he asked.

"He's digging a hole about a hundred yards further up in the woods."

A few minutes later they were joined by Jack, and the three then gathered up the treasure and followed him back to the excavation he had made. They had to make several trips ere all the bags were removed. Then they covered up the bags in the hole, smoothed the ground over and piled leaves upon it until it appeared quite natural. The loose earth that had been removed was scattered around so as to leave no mound, and more leaves were brought to cover that.

"I guess that's all right now, pard," said Jack, as he looked around.

"Yes, I guess it is," assented Yankee Doodle, "and now we'll go back to our horses."

The two axes and the shovels they concealed, and then hurried back to the bridge, crossed over to the other side, made their way down to the spring where they drank copiously of the cooling water, bathed their hands and faces, after which they caught their horses, saddled them, stuck their pistols in their belts, mounted and rode away.

That night they encamped in the woods near the home of the old Spaniard whose daughter they had escorted down into Rio del Pinar.

Everything on the place was just as they had left it.

"I had expected they would have burned the house down before this, pard," remarked Jack.

"Oh, give 'em time, and they'll do that. There are no insurgents around here, so they can take their leisure in doing that sort of thing."

Early the next morning they mounted their horses again and by noon had reached the camp, where old Manuel was waiting for them. The old Cuban suspected nothing, and reported that nothing of interest had happened in their absence.

"Well," said Yankee Doodle, "we may as well return to the army, because we have seen enough to satisfy the general that Blanco has no intention of sending reinforcements to Santiago de Cuba. He is fortifying Havana for the purpose of defending the city to the bitter end."

The next day they started on their journey towards the south coast a few miles west of Cienfuegos. There they signaled to one of the blockading vessels, and were taken on board, leaving their horses to run free at their own sweet will.

When Yankee Doodle reached Santiago and made his report the general was satisfied with his work, and thanked him in the name of the army. He little dreamed, however, of the great fortune the three young Americans had made on the trip, and they, like the wise boys they were, told no one their secret. They are now waiting for a chance to transfer the treasure to the United States, where the rest of their days they will live in clover.

[THE END.]

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